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**OF BELGIUM**



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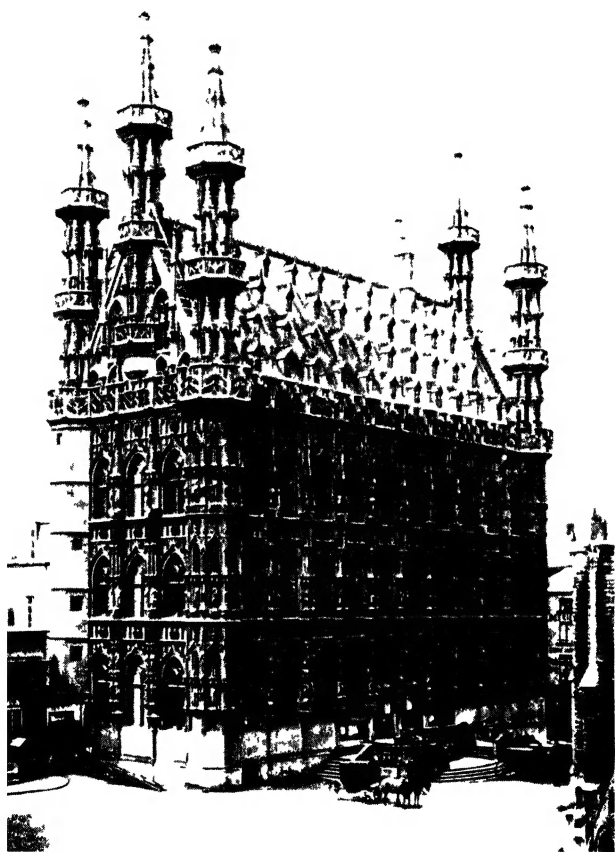
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# **THE FASCINATION OF BELGIUM**

BY

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**BSc ACGI**

WITH TWENTY FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS  
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

**A & C BLACK, LTD**  
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## **PREFACE**

THIS little book has been written with the idea of giving some glimpses of the life and conditions prevailing in Belgium before the tyrant of oppression carried destruction through the land. No account therefore has been given of the war and its ravages.

Little, too, has been said of the political history of the country, but since Belgium has been the home of industrial tradition, some brief account has been given of her industrial development, the rise of the merchant and craft guilds, and the growth of her beautiful towns. In connection with this I have much pleasure in recording my thanks to Professor Unwin of Manchester University, and in acknowledging my indebtedness to the many books and articles of M. Pirenne of Ghent.

I am also indebted to the following works  
"L'Organisation du Travail à Bruxelles au XV

Siècle," par G des Marez, "Les Métiers de Namur," by J B Goetstouwers of Louvain, "Histoire de l'Architecture en Belgique," by A G Schayes, "Belgium of the Belgians," by D C Boulger, "Early Flemish Artists," by Sir Martin Conway, "Belgians at Home," by Clive Holland, "History of Architecture," by James Fergusson

It has been the misfortune of Belgium that she has provided battle-fields not only for her own rulers but for her powerful neighbours, and that from early times the different counties, dukedoms, and principalities which now make a united kingdom were under the sway of first one monarch, then another. By marriage or inheritance the land passed into the hands of the Burgundian Dynasty, thence became part of the Central Empire, and later suffered as a justly rebellious province of Spain. In still later times it has been ruled by Austria and joined to Holland, from which unwilling partnership it revolted less than a century ago. To stop further hostilities the Great Powers of Europe stepped in, and on April 19, 1839, a treaty was drawn up in London constituting the kingdom of Belgium "an inde-

## OF BELGIUM

## PREFACE

pendent and perpetually neutral state" This treaty was signed by Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and when ruthlessly broken by Germany in 1914, was contemptuously referred to by the German Chancellor as a "scrap of paper"

Since then the unhappy country has suffered all the wrongs and agony that human wickedness can invent and human agents inflict Through it all there stands out one figure typical of the country's heroism—the figure of her undaunted King, whose land is desolate and whose throne is threatened, but whose soul will shine as a star on the long road of Eternity





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# BELGIUM

## CHAPTER I

### LAND AND WATER

It is not often that we now look to trade for either an inspiration or an ideal, but there is something particularly appropriate at the present time in recalling the motto "Courage to the last" of the great iron works at Liège. It is true that this "établissement Cockerill" was founded by an Englishman, and the motto is his, but the thousands of hardy, muscular Liégeois in the works are the fitting descendants of the hard-fighting Walloons of medieval times, when their blows were aimed at each other as readily as they are now hurled at their possibly more submissive metal.

The geographical position of Belgium has always made the country a great trading country and her towns great commercial centres. At the southern corner of the delta of the Meuse and Scheldt, the western provinces of Belgium en-

joyed all the advantages of a flat country without the disadvantages from which Holland and the northern part of the delta suffered. Her boundaries had not to be wrested from the sea and protected by stone dykes, she was in no constant fear of inundation and floods whenever a westerly gale drove the North Sea against her shores with violence, and increased the height of her tides. Rather had Nature provided her with natural protection in the shape of the sand-dunes which run round the whole length of the coast from the north of France to the Zeeland province of the Dutch Netherlands.

The delta formation of the land made it, however, very easy to canalize many of the smaller streams and to cut canals connecting them. Thus, in the fourteenth century, a canal existed from Ghent to Bruges and Bruges to Ostend, while Brussels was connected by artificial waterways with the Rupel and the Scheldt. The rivers themselves were always of immense importance, and merchandise made its way along them long before any roads were built which could compete with the water for ease of transit.

The importance of the Scheldt is obvious, and cities on her banks such as Ghent and Tournai were important even in the tenth century, when Tournai waxed rich on the tolls she exacted from the boats going through her domain. That was







*Porto della Biennale*

*Canal in Centro*

## OF BELGIUM

## LAND AND WATER

in the days when pirates found Antwerp such an easy prey from the sea that she had not dared to grow into a mercantile centre

In all the old cities, such as Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, will be found either a *Maison des Bateliers* or some relic of its existence, this was the Guild House of the Watermen, an important craft society even before the days when craft societies practically ruled the towns. A quarrel between the Bateliers of Ghent and Ypres was one of the causes of the attack on Ypres by the Ghentois, when they fought with such fierceness that it was said, "In one day were picked up in the streets of Ypres so many arrows as to fill over-full two tuns."

You do not notice the canals in Belgium quite as much as in Holland, except perhaps in Bruges, nor are they quite so picturesque as a rule, but they are more numerous than may at first sight be imagined, and, in conjunction with the rivers, they are of immense importance. There are at present fifty-two systems of canals, accounting for a thousand miles of waterway, as well as five "ship canals," which add on another seventy miles.

As over a thousand million tons of various goods—agricultural, industrial, and mineral—pass over the internal canals every year, it can be seen that these canals mean as much to Belgium as the more northern ones do to Holland. You do, how-

ever, miss the brown sails and curved prow of the Dutch tjalks and the painted bows of the Dutch barges

We must be glad that the Meuse can carry down upon her waters iron ore for Liège and Charleroi from the famous mines in the Vosges, for in this way the French ore can rival that from Germany in cheapness of transit. But barges of iron ore are apt to be grimy and dull, and admirers of both Belgium and Holland will feel some regrets that the Belgian boats cannot show the spotless cleanliness of the Dutch ones, nor reflect in the waters the rich red and blue bands of the daintier craft

There is a more romantic suggestion about wines than about iron ore, and the Meuse which carries the one also brings down from its upper reaches the wines of Champagne and Burgundy, for if the river itself does not pass the vineyards, there are connecting French canals that do, so the casks come down unshaken from their home to the cellars of Dinant or Namur. Perhaps that accounts for the excellence of the French wines in all the cities on the Meuse

The importance of the waterways to Belgium can be seen from even the few statements here given, so it is little to be wondered at if the Belgians give a good deal of thought to what is happening on the lower reaches of the Meuse, for

the river is theirs only as far as Visé, but, by the will of the Powers, Dutch on the right bank beyond, and Dutch on both banks at Maestricht

The Belgians have done all they can below Liége right to the Dutch frontier, dredging, embanking, and deepening the way, but the Dutch have not troubled about the lower part of the river, for the simple reason that anything they did would chiefly benefit Liége. In point of fact, however, it would also benefit the province of Dutch Limburg, to which nothing larger than barges can ascend, and whose people find the navigation of the river very dangerous when the Meuse and its tributary, the Roer, are in flood. Both Limburgers and Belgians ask for the Meuse to be embanked and canalized between Visé and Venlo, and a joint commission has been considering the matter. It will probably be done if the Dutch can be convinced that the value of the land they would reclaim from the floods would compensate them for the immense cost of dyking the river.

## CHAPTER II

## THE SEACOAST

If you are bent on business—especially large and important business—you probably enter Belgium (from this side of the North Sea) by its great port, Antwerp, or by the modern one of Zeebrugge ; but if you are bent on pleasure, you will go straight away to the spot which is in itself the great haunt of pleasure—Ostend

Ostend is now one of the gayest and most fashionable watering-places in Europe, as you quickly realize when you see the brilliant crowd gathered on the western jetty—the Estacade de l'Ouest—as the mail-boat from Dover glides gracefully by. And that brilliant crowd is only the more energetic section of the cosmopolitan visitors who flock to Ostend from the inland towns of all European countries

The sand dunes fringing the Belgian coast seem unpromising enough as foundation for a budding town, but the great broad promenade—the Digue—the palatial hotels, and the spacious villas, show what can be built upon the sands





when determination and industry are in league together

There is little left of the old original fishing town, and what there is is rather of the human than masonic side. No longer does it guard with its fortress the flat lands behind from sea-rovers in front, its ramparts are merely promenades for the gay. Its old church, dear to the fisher-folk since the eleventh century, has long since been lapped up by fire. All the same, bits of the fisher life can be found up near the inner harbour and in the back streets around it. There are, of course, the red-brown sails of the fishing-boats, and the fishing-nets—blue or brown—hung up to dry on boat or quay. Here and there, too, some of the older women trudge about near the water's edge in short dark skirt and light wooden sabots, still wearing on their heads the picturesque white cap of ancient custom. The fishermen, like all Continental fishermen of the West and South, exhibit picturesque thrift in the patching of their clothes, and deploy themselves in leisured groups in the usual manner of fishermen. Naturally, the *Marché aux Poissons* presents a lively scene when the boats come in, and the brisk trade done at the *quais* accounts for some of the cheapness of living all over Belgium, for fresh fish is within easy reach of all the big towns.

The *Marché aux Herbes* shows the country-folk



at their best in Ostend as well as in other towns, and more white caps can be seen there than anywhere else in the town

The brass cans of the milkman—more often a milk-woman—shine here as brightly as they do in Holland, and the big dogs trained to draw the milkcart know how to take their rest in the shade beneath the cart whenever the owner stops on her round. But, after all, these corners are not the Ostend which the visitor goes to see or think about, they are only the touches which show that no fashion and no gaiety can exist without some assistance from primitive industry

August shows this seaside town at its fullest and brightest. All the hotels and villas have been painted afresh the month before, and gleam like white palaces behind the sparkling sand and sea. The sand and sea are a perpetual joy from early morning, when the energetic go upon paddling expeditions armed with shrimping nets, to late evening, when the fishing fleet goes in or out of the harbour through the moonlight

As for the morning bathing, it is more a show than a sport, for there are few swimmers, and the shallow water is crowded with every kind of weird and expensive costume that can be fixed upon a human form. Bathing-machines are still accepted at Ostend, and add a marvellous medley of colour with their brilliantly striped wooden walls. There

is a great rush for them, but tickets for their hire have to be obtained in a proper and orderly way, which explains the long queue at each of the bathing bureaux at the front of the Digue. The provident form another queue, smaller and more cautious than the other, these are they who wish to put their watches, money, and jewels into safe keeping while they frolic, free from the cares of wealth, in the dancing waves. As money seems prevalent at Ostend above everywhere, every possible contrivance is made to catch it, so even in the matter of bathing-machines luxury is provided for, and more elaborately carved *cabines de luxe* can be hired for many times the price of the others.

Amidst all the fashion are to be seen the stalwart forms of the *sauveteurs*, who walk up and down in the water armed with rope and lifebuoys ready to rescue any too venturesome bather who is out of his depth.

Here and there, too, a small crowd collects as some amateur photographer "snaps" his friends in the water, or a persevering professional poses his victims on the steps of their machines. The professional takes longer than the amateur, so the crowd of onlookers gathers force and strength. Various units of the crowd, too, rendered bold by the presence of protective numbers, do not hesitate to make remarks, complimentary or otherwise,

about the form and costume of the "subject" Sometimes the subject cannot live it out, and beats a precipitate retreat out of earshot to the sea

The constant change of dress and rush from one amusement to another, from the racing at the Hippodrome to a tennis match at the club, and from every kind of entertainment at the Kursaal to the various elaborate meals at hotel or restaurant, provide a picture of movement and extravagance not equalled at any other spot north of the Mediterranean Ostend in the season is truly a centre of expensive gaiety

It is worth while taking a special look at the primitive soil upon which Ostend arose, and then marvel at its gardens To realize the difficulties of the gardener you have but to go round the harbour to the new lighthouse and see the natural earth upon which he had to work The sand-dunes stretch onwards right round the coast, and if here and there the bent-grass gives them cohesion, and makes them into protective hills against any specially enraged sea, the sandhills themselves do not look a very hospitable corner of Nature's home

The Belgians, however, were not to be beaten by the arid sands, and by dint of skill and energy they have turned acre after acre into smiling gardens The park at Ostend, with its beds of brilliant flowers and its waving trees, is a beautiful

example of the triumph of will and industry over difficulty and obstacle

A walk along the sand-dunes or a spin along the road just behind them gives plenty of evidence of this Belgian industry, for here and there are quaint villas set in a space which is only a garden in hope. A few weedy flowers and straggling trees fight for life in the very obvious yellow sand. Every year, however, the trees spread their branches and the flowers cover more of the sand, until at last the faith of the gardening owner has justified itself, and he can sit under the shade of his sturdy bushes and inhale the scent of his victorious flowers. If any patch still remains dry and yellow, he has a sack indoors, whose contents will soon reduce it to dutiful productiveness.

These villas have greatly grown in recent years on the dunes round the small hamlets which occur every dozen miles or so along the coast, and gradually the hamlets are developing into populous seaside resorts, not of course rivaling Ostend.

Blankenberghe, Heyst, and Knocke are now all well known on the east of the fashionable port, and have a delight and charm of their own. Blankenberghe's small harbour protects more than a hundred little fishing-boats, which often rush in front of a rising wind into the flanking protection of the two Estacades. On those same jetties can be seen the contemplative forms of Belgian

anglers, as indeed also on many of the stone groynes. It would seem that to their patient faith in the cultivation of the sand they add their equally patient faith in the exploiting of the sea. Their rewards, however, are less obvious, but, perhaps, the occupation is none the less soothing on that account.

The Belgian watering-places have an immense advantage over their English sisters. They have no rows of ugly, forbidding-looking houses, which with us are so frequently ill-kept and dingy. The Belgian method of taking a holiday is either to go into a hotel (whose pension prices are most reasonable) or to take a villa. The villas are quite delightful, and no two are alike. If they are away from the sea, they have gardens, if on the digue, they have verandas. Some of the verandas form a regular open-air room, where light refreshments can be taken, or the members of the family can read or sew a couple of feet above the pavement. A charming method of getting a short chat with their friends is thus provided, and life offers many simple pleasures of a healthy and unconventional kind.

The sands everywhere are magnificent, so that bathing, followed by golf on the dunes, is always the great enjoyment of the visitors, while innumerable parties attempt tennis or croquet on the *plage*, undeterred by the breaks in the sandy

smoothness caused by the hoof of a donkey or the wheel of a bathing-machine

If Blankenberghe provides more shops, certainly the market of Heyst, especially at the end of July, is immensely attractive. At that time the traders, like the merchants of old, seem to appear from all parts of Europe, and make their open stalls bright with the wares of East and South. It is obvious that many come from Italy, for there are the bright-striped rugs, the mosaic jewellery, and the painted vellum with which the Italian always tries to capture those on holiday bent. Armenians, Greeks, and Turks have their corner with gold and silver embroideries and women's work in fine linen. These are the most talkative of all the wandering merchants, and they have the usual Oriental method of asking a price which bears little resemblance to that which they are prepared to take. When one of them does a piece of trading that pleases him, he throws up his head and calls out "O la la" in a loud voice. This is taken up by all the other stall-holders, so that there is a regular din after a few purchases have been made. It is advisable to watch your change carefully when dealing with these deputies from the East, or better still, to pay them in such coin that no change other than a few sous is required.

Never give them gold, or you may easily live

to regret the silver—and specially the five franc pieces—you have received as change

Both Heyst and Knocke are just the places for those in search of bracing air and for those who prefer tranquillity to fashion, it is possible at both to wear other than the “latest” frocks. They are a haven of rest for the tired. Even the *sauveteurs* of Heyst seem more leisurely of movement than their brothers of Ostend. The brown-sailed trawlers come in with less hurry to unload their catch on a calm day at Heyst than when they chase each other to the Bassin at Blankenberghe. As for Knocke, its windmill stands as a symbol of stately motion divorced from hurry, and the fisher-folk give a sense of peace and rest as they talk outside the white cottages in their straggling street.

Truly Heyst and Knocke have no league with grandeur, they are only for those in search of delight

**CHAPTER III****FLEMINGS AND WALLOONS**

THE size of the country, whose coast is scarcely a four hours' journey from ours, is roughly 11,400 square miles, and upon this land—small as European countries count—subsists a population of seven and a half million people. In Belgium people are more densely packed than in any other country of the globe, there being 658 persons to every square mile. There are therefore more than twice as many people to the square mile in Belgium as there are in Germany and Italy, and not quite twice as many as in the United Kingdom.

So great a crowding of population can only exist in a manufacturing country, and we should therefore expect Belgium to resemble in some ways our own manufacturing districts. Actually both in size and population Belgium is almost identical with the northern part of England. Start from the Cheviots and sweep over the five northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham, Yorkshire and Lancashire, and you



## FLEMINGS AND WALLOONS **THE FASCINATION**

arrive at an area of 12,200 square miles—scarcely any more than that of Belgium, with a population of just over seven and a half million people—so that our busy north gives us some idea of the intensity of life and work in the land of the Flemings and Walloons

If the whole of our kingdom were as densely peopled as Belgium, we should possess a population of nearly eighty million human beings—that is to say, a greater number than there are Germans in their huge country

You might expect that Brussels, as the capital, would be also correspondingly great, but fortunately the beautiful town only contains 180,000 people, and shows no signs of rivalling either Berlin, New York, or Vienna. It is about the same size as Algiers, Tunis, or Athens, and half the size of Washington, Lisbon, or Stockholm

Of the two groups of people—Flemings and Walloons—who inhabit this land, more than half are Flemings. The Walloons are to be found chiefly round Liège, Namur, and in the valley of the Meuse, while the Flemings inhabit the valley of the Scheldt—though, of course, there is a fair amount of overlapping, as, for instance, in Brussels

Taking the provinces, it will be seen that whereas the Flemings inhabit East and West Flanders, Antwerp, and Hainault, the Walloons claim Liège, Namur, Luxemburg, and Limburg

## OF BELGIUM

## FLEMINGS AND WALLOONS

Brabant is divided between the two, and can be regarded as a link between them, or as a barrier—according to the point of view

The ancient Walloon language is a kind of French patois with a good mixture of Celtic and German words. When written it looks like an illiterate kind of French—as the following lines from the Children's Prayer to St Nicholas (Santa Claus) will show

“Vinez, Saint Nicolèye,  
Li d'ou d'voss 'tièsse est arive,  
Vinez, djans, dji v's è prèye,  
Alons, djans hay, vinez”

The corresponding French being

“Venez, Saint Nicholas,  
Le jour de votre fête est arrivé,  
Venez, allons, je vous en prie,  
Allons, venez vite, venez”

In parts of Liège and Luxemburg working people still speak this old language amongst themselves, but the educated Walloons speak pure French. The Walloon language has not been preserved in any literature, it was a spoken, not a written, language, for all who could write wrote French. Hence, except for a few folk-songs, there is little to keep a permanent record of the Walloon language.

It is fortunate that the people on the eastern side of Belgium are the very ones whose speech

## FLEMINGS AND WALLOONS **THE FASCINATION**

was allied not to German but to French, so that they have cut off from Germany the Flemish provinces whose speech is a kind of Low German. It is that fact which has in the past preserved Belgium as a nation from the all-absorbing tendency of her grasping neighbour. The Flemish provinces have in the past been dependencies of France, so that in spite of their language French influence has been largely felt—in fact for centuries French has been the language of the educated and aristocratic families.

At the present time there are more than three-quarters of a million Belgians who can speak both Flemish and French, just over three million speak Flemish only, and rather fewer French only, including Walloon.

At the time of the revolt of Belgium against Holland, in 1830, it was the Walloons who organized and carried out the movement, so that at that time France was the language most to the fore, and it spoke much for the spirit of fairness which animated the leaders that they did not make French the official language, but left Flemish with equal rights. All the same, for half a century French did play the leading part, both in official speech and documents, as well as in the newspapers.

Gradually, however, a literary movement on the side of Flemish began to grow, and from

being solely literary it began to be political. The Flemings being more unquestioning Roman Catholics than the Walloons, and clinging more to the past, they formed a Roman Catholic Conservative party. In many localities they framed enactments which pushed their language to the fore. They expected, for instance, all their civil employes to speak Flemish, if they were not Flemish by birth, and on the whole it was little use for a Walloon to aspire to be, for example, a policeman in Antwerp, as he would have to pass a Flemish test, and it is quite sure he would not succeed unless a Flemish name added to his qualifications.

The Liberal party—practically all Walloons—kept its majority in the Chamber of Representatives and its hold on the administration till the clerical party—the Flemings—won a majority in 1894. From that moment things changed, every street which had previously been easily enough known and found under a French name suddenly received the decoration of a Flemish name as well. At every street-corner, therefore, there appears a double sign, and on every railway-station a double name. So you see at the corner of Ghent market square the name “Koorn Markt,” as well as “Marché aux Grains,” while “Mechelen” figures equally with “Malines.”

All official documents had previously been

## **FLEMINGS AND WALLOONS THE FASCINATION**

written in either language, which generally meant French, as all people likely to read official documents could read and speak French, but now they had to be written in both. The elementary schools, too, were interfered with, and throughout the provinces of Flanders and Antwerp Flemish was insisted on as the language of teachers and children. Although Ghent University was allowed to continue its teaching in French, a portion of it was converted into a Flemish Academy endowed with State funds, Flemish theatres, too, also built at the cost of the State, arose in Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent.

An attempt was made just at the end of the century to enforce the teaching of both languages by insisting that anyone entering any State post should know both French and Flemish. Curiously enough this was resisted by the Flemings, who saw themselves confronted for the first time with the necessity of studying French. They feared that French would prove so attractive in Flanders that many of their own kith and kin would be lured to adopt it. So in 1909 they got a law through the Belgian Chamber upsetting the bilingual idea and letting each father choose the language for his children. A conservative Flemish father will thus settle that no boy of his shall know a word of French when he leaves school. So, however clever the boy, it will be of no use





to him to go to Ghent University, with its old traditions, but with its lectures in French, he must enter the newer Flemish Academy, much below the standard of a University, and be unable to get a full diploma

It must not be forgotten that the action against French is not one of language only. The French language brings with it French influence and French ideas, and the Flemish or clerical party find that the easiest way to resist these influences is to oppose the medium by which they are spread. It will be seen that it is in Germany's interest and against the interest of France that the Flemish movement should succeed.

Both French and Flemish have produced their modern writers, of whom the best known here are probably Maeterlinck and Verhaeren — philosopher and poet, but whereas both began as supporters of the Flemish movement, both were led to abandon Flemish for French as they felt the call of a wider world.

The newspapers of Belgium are in French or Flemish according to their district. In Brussels, Louvain, and Liège they are in French, in Antwerp and Ghent in Flemish. None of them suffer from over-moderation in their political zeal, and they are all political. All express their views on the opposite party in language which is at times picturesque rather than polite. But politics



FLEMINGS AND WALLOONS **THE FASCINATION**

run high in Belgium, and each town has its rival clubs or *cercles* — the one Catholic, the other Liberal — meeting regularly at some chosen restaurant or hotel

**CHAPTER IV****THE LAND AND ITS WORKERS**

LIVING is cheap in Belgium, and the people are both thrifty and industrious. In spite of their great activity as a mining and industrial people, their prosperity is still largely due to the land and their skill in wresting from it all that it will give. Roughly, it would appear that half the people are supported by the produce of the soil, the proportion being much greater than that in the purely agricultural provinces of Luxemburg and Limburg, and much less in the mining, industrial, and commercial provinces of Liége, Hainault and Antwerp.

An immense proportion of the land of Belgium is cultivated, and the waste land steadily decreases. Forestry there is raised to a science, and the forests are protected by law. No ruthless builder can in Belgium cut down an avenue of stately monarchs in order to erect a row of ugly habitations as he can in England. Before the trees can be cut down permission must be obtained from a Government official, and arrangements must be

made to plant another for every tree cut down. This law has only existed for the last ten years, and does not yet apply to more than half the forest land, but it shows that the Government of the country are rightly alive to the necessity of guarding a product of the soil which not only adds to the beauty of the country, but brings in an annual revenue of nearly a million pounds.

About a quarter of a million people own their own land, and more than half a million rent it—the rent working out at about thirty shillings an acre. As more than half of these only work a patch about an acre in extent, it is easy to see how the kind of cultivation which is generally described as intensive has grown up. A great deal of wheat is of course grown, and whereas we in the United Kingdom produce just over thirty-one bushels per acre, the Belgians manage to wrest nearly thirty-nine bushels from the same plot. In the case of barley, we get thirty-four bushels, and the Belgians forty-eight out of every acre.

But it is in market-gardening that this industrious people has excelled itself. By proper attention to the production of chosen seed, by the provision of nursery grounds and the use of glass, an immense yield of fruit and vegetables is now obtained, and the horticultural colleges see to it that it is not for want of a source of

information if a man puts unproductive labour into his land. In practice, however, he combines knowledge with industry, and so bit by bit every corner of his garden and field brings forth its due contribution, and many a track of land which a few years ago was uncultivated and barren has become in its turn as fertile as the rest of the country.

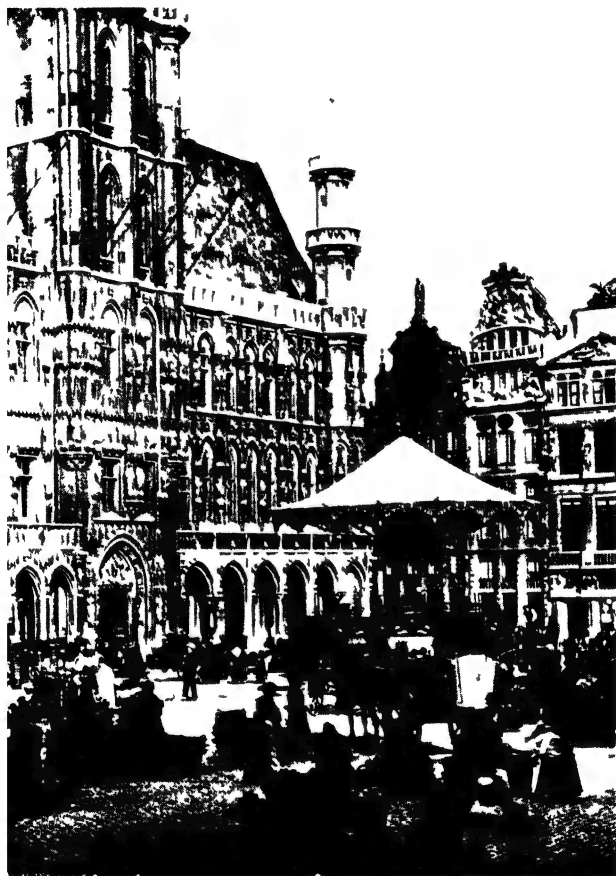
The low-lying land of West Flanders has responded splendidly to the call of the tiller, and now resembles a great market garden, with Ghent and Bruges as the centres of a growing flower industry. The small tracts under different ownership possess none of the beauties of the English hedge boundaries, but are separated from each other by little ditches or trenches, suggesting the fields of Holland on a diminished scale. Perhaps the best known example of the conversion of what was considered a useless tract of land into a productive region is furnished by the "Pays de Waes." This is to the north of Ghent, on the left bank of the Scheldt, it was, little more than half a century ago, a desert tract of hopeless sand. To-day, as the result of untiring cultivation, it has become one of the most productive regions in Flanders. This has set an example to the provinces of Namur and Luxemburg, where stones and rocks are now giving way before industry, and fields of corn are gradually appearing

in place of arid wastes The "Pays de Herve," in the Province of Liège, is a valiant rival of the "Pays de Waes" It is not only in their language that the Flemings resemble the Dutch ; they have the same unflinching perseverance in overcoming all the difficulties which Nature puts in their path.

The country people rise very early, and the women play their part in the general productiveness of the nation Their wages cannot be said to be very high , they average about a shilling a day without food, the corresponding men's wages being about one and eightpence There are certain parts where the wages are rather better, and they reach their highest in Namur and Luxemburg, two shillings being earned by a man and one and fivepence by a woman At Limburg the wages seem scarcely enough to support life at all, and in Flanders they are not very much better—between one and twopence and one and fourpence for a man, while a woman gets only about tenpence On the whole, the Walloon farm-labourer demands and receives rather higher rates than the Flemish

The intensive cultivation produces masses of fresh vegetables—in fact, no country in Europe is so plentifully supplied with fresh vegetables at such a cheap rate. In some parts two cauliflowers can occasionally be bought for a penny, so that, although the labourer on the land receives little





*Photograph by A. Baillon*

# THE GRAND PLACE, BRUSSELS

Hôtel de Ville and Guild Houses of the Merchants, the Skippers, and the Archers

money, what he does receive goes a long way. Vegetables form a large part of the family diet, and the soup which forms their chief daily food is largely made from them, enriched by the bodies of the unfortunate small birds which are snared by the poor as a matter of course

It is extremely easy for anyone who grows any agricultural produce to dispose of it quickly. From the very earliest times Belgium has been well provided with markets. They were naturally, to begin with, established round about the church—then the very real centre of town-life. They were known as the church markets—"Kirk messe"—which rapidly became Kermesse. As the market in earlier times formed the chief opportunity for travel and meeting, it was a scene of pleasure as well as profit, and the word "Kermesse" has lived on as the popular name, not of a serious market, but of a fair, which is, perhaps, in these times the nearest equivalent of the old-time markets.

There are over 1,700 markets and fairs still held, some, like the vegetable market at Malines, being held every day, others, like the *Marché du Vendredi* at Ghent, every week.

There are over 700 annual markets or fairs, two of the most important being the Horse Fairs of Thourout and Cmey. The importance of the Flemish one at Thourout increases every year,



and cattle as well as horses are exhibited for prizes. Ciney is a little town in the Ardennes, about fifty miles from Namur, and it is during the several days' duration of the fair that German officials cross the frontier in order to provide their artillery with the powerful Ardennes horses. There is a tragic irony in the fact that Belgium has supplied her cruel enemy with the very horses used to drag such hideous weapons of destruction against herself.

The Kermesse itself is still held—though chiefly in the provinces of Flanders, Antwerp, Hainault, and Brabant—and to the usual gaudy attractions of an ordinary fair it generally adds something in the way of a procession. Even Brussels is not above celebrating its Kermesse—in fact, not one Kermesse, but several, for each commune runs wild for a week in turn, and changes a wide *marché* or boulevard into a scene of noise and rough enjoyment. The old part of the city, which, with its monuments of democratic government and commerce, clusters round the Grand Place, still contains the Flemish-speaking portion of the inhabitants, and these celebrate their Kermesse by a procession winding through all the streets of the Lower Town. Then it is that they dress up the little statue known as the Mannikin, and parade it in the costume of a Civic Guard. As this statue dates from 1619, it is often referred to

as "the oldest citizen in Brussels," and his costumes, changed with each change in the form of Government in Belgium, already make up a varied wardrobe. This is the procession which is sometimes regarded with some distrust by the police. Should any labour troubles be agitating the capital, they are sure to find expression—and the expression is by no means welcomed by the authorities—when the Mannikin makes his tour at the Kermesse.

Many of the Kermesses are held in the summer—in July and August—but Binche, in Hainault, holds a very famous one on Shrove Tuesday. It is, perhaps, more like a carnival than a fair as we understand it. There are no booths, but everyone wears a fancy costume and appears in the streets. At least, it is strictly advisable to be in the streets, for one of the characteristics of the fête is the throwing of oranges at all windows through which onlookers regard the scene. It is not considered etiquette to pelt those in the street from the windows, so the onlooker is at a distinct disadvantage. Better is it, therefore, to close the shutters, fasten the windows, put on a false nose and a pierrot's cap, and join the throng without.

A curious band, which plays special music, is composed of certain young men known as the Gilles. Each member of the Gilles Society wears an elaborate costume, not the least expensive part

of which is a magnificently plumed hat. It is said that heredity governs the membership of the society, and that the costumes descend from father to son.

The Gilles naturally express themselves in dance as well as in music, and form, with their gaily attired friends, a long and riotous procession through the town to the park, where the carnival centres. From the eve preceding Shrove Tuesday till dawn on the following Wednesday *Bûche* is given up to revelry and dance.

On the day of the Assumption (August 15), which is a national holiday throughout the land, religious processions can be seen everywhere, whether it be in the cathedral town of Malines or in some village on the banks of the Meuse.

The celebration at Hasselt—the chief town of Limburg—takes on, however, a very special character once every seven years, the last time of its occurrence having been in 1912. There is a mixture of pagan and Christian ideas in this fête, just as there is in the “Pardons” of Brittany. This part of the country was once covered with a hazel-wood, in the depth of which dwelt a terrible giant. The route through the wood was therefore not only beset with the usual difficulties which the traveller was accustomed to encounter, but presented in the proximity of the giant a new terror to life and spirit.





Half-way through the wood was a wooden statue of the Virgin, where travellers were wont to offer prayers of thankfulness for their safe arrival, and prayers of hope for further assistance. The thankfulness took a practical form, and offerings were made at the shrine. Hence a chapel arose, and in the clearing round it a few huts formed the nucleus of the future town of Hasselt. It is said that the first hut was put up by a certain Hendrich, who pursued the calling of a swineherd, so he figures in the imagination of modern Hasselt as the earliest inhabitant.

Now, on one occasion a valiant knight lost his way in the forest, but, appealing to the Virgin, was led by her to Hendrich's hut in the shadow of her chapel. Refreshed by rest and hospitality, the knight went forth into the wood and killed the giant.

From that moment the wood lost its terrors, the fame of the succouring Virgin spread afar, and the town grew apace.

This story was celebrated every year till the eighteenth century, when the fête was restricted to its present presentation.

There are great preparations when its revival is due. All the streets are suddenly transformed into a hazel-wood as if by magic. It is true that the hazel-trees are only in tubs, but their appearance gives a delightful aspect to the town. The

houses, too, are almost concealed by branches and trees gathered for the purpose from neighbouring woods. On the day of the Assumption the blackened wooden image of the Virgin is taken from her place of honour in the church, dressed in costly robes, and crowned with jewels. Thus attired, she is carried in procession through the forest streets attended by a troupe of maidens dressed in white. That is the religious ceremony.

After it comes the lay procession, where Hendrich is represented on a cart. He is accompanied by wife and pigs, and is followed by a huge giant in effigy. The giant rides in a chariot dragged by four horses, and, dressed in all the glory of tinsel armour, is extremely popular.

Behind him follows a barrel of soup in charge of an attendant, and all who wish to partake of the contents need do nothing more than present a basin to be filled. How the soup crept into the ceremony none can tell.

Another septennial celebration takes place at Foy Notre Dame, near Dinant, when a procession, starting from Rochefort, winds its way to the shrine of the Virgin, and commemorates a pilgrimage which a certain Count of Rochefort made to the same shrine to obtain relief from the plague.

In various parts of the valleys of the Meuse and Sambre there are many similar processions,

most of them commemorating some old pilgrimage of faith or representing some miraculous act

It is curious to note how often a giant figures in these processions. At Malines they possess a whole family of giants, without whom no cortege is complete. "Janneke en Mieke" are each 10 yards high, and their three children run to about half that size. They are of wicker-work, and have lived for centuries in the old Hall on the Grande Place, just opposite the Cathedral, whence, clad in their old-time dresses, they emerge on all occasions of processional activity on the part of the townfolk, and, with the assistance of human forms within, make their tour of the main streets. They are invariably followed by the "Grootvader," another giant, this time riding on a chariot. Since he is invariably clad as a Roman officer, it would appear that he cannot be so nearly related to the family of Janneke en Mieke as his name would suggest.

There are two great occasions when the City of Malines lays itself out for festivity and pageant. One is to commemorate a pilgrimage made by Maximilian of Austria to the Shrine of Notre Dame d'Hanswyk, and the other is the glorification of St Rombaut, the Patron Saint of Malines. It was in 1477 that the Netherlands came into the hands of the Hapsburg family by the marriage of Mary of Burgundy with



Maximilian (afterwards Emperor of Germany), and it was as ruler of the Netherlands that he held his Court at Malines, and made the pilgrimage which has since been celebrated every twenty-five years

The historic procession consists of about 1,500 persons—three-quarters of them being on horse-back—dressed in the costumes of Maximilian's Court in the early sixteenth century. Great preparation is made beforehand, and no expense is spared to make the pageant as impressive and accurate as possible. The principal personages of the procession are represented by members of the leading families of the town, at the last celebration Maximilian of Austria was represented by the son of the Burgomaster. The procession always lines up in the Boulevard de Sablon, and, after a tiring couple of hours of arrangement and rearrangement, starts off down the Rue de l'Empereur, past the old Palace (now the Court of Justice) of Maximilian's daughter, Margaret, and so into the Grande Place. Thence it winds its way through many streets, including the Rue Notre Dame d'Hanswyk, though it makes no pause at the modern church built on the site of the old shrine. On three different days in the month of August—generally on Sundays, or perhaps on two Sundays and on August 15 (the Feast of Assumption)—the pro-

## OF BELGIUM

## LAND AND WORKERS

cession sets forth, and crowds flow in from north and south. As those who take part cannot also see the procession, many of the actors supply themselves with understudies, so if Mdlle Helène represents the satin-clad English Ambassadors at Maximilian's Court one day, it will be her sister, Mdlle Josepha, who will wear the dress on another.

The procession of St Rombaut is still more important, and takes place only every fifty years, the next occasion being in 1926. That is the time when all the jewelled heirlooms of the citizens are brought out, and the dresses are of the utmost magnificence. The procession is partly historic and partly religious—St Rombaut being the leading figure—yet it is essentially the town's procession, and not the Cathedral's. The Cathedral will celebrate its Patron's Feast Day in its own way.

In both these processions, as well as in any other that may take place (such as the one in 1905, held to celebrate the seventy-five years Independence of Belgium), the giants bring up the rear. There are other popular figures, too. The great horse, known as the "Vier gebrœders paard," must be ridden by four brothers, though the activities of the horse are provided for by wheels and eight men below. The real brothers on the top are clad as Roman soldiers.

The "Roue de la Fortune" is a popular allegory, and as the wheel turns it shows the rich and poor of every class, represented by mannikins alternately reaching the top and descending to the bottom. But the greatest favourite of the whole pageant is the wooden-headed figure known as the "First Citizen of Malines," who goes through the streets, tossed in a blanket, to the cheers and cries of the crowd of "Hop Signoortje!" The figure was stolen from Antwerp years ago, so he is always kept in a locked safe in the Musée des Archives, lest one day some daring patriot from Antwerp should arrange to steal him back again. His rôle attains to still greater dignity as the procession comes to an end. He alone of all the actors, human or otherwise, enters the Town Hall and mounts to the top window. There he overlooks the great square, and his wooden hands applaud the cheers which rise from the crowd as they call out "Hop Signoortje!"

**CHAPTER V****THE CAVELAND OF BELGIUM**

THE districts of Rochefort and the Sambre are not only remarkable for the traditional fête of the people, they provide a pleasure-ground for the adventurous of all nations

Belgium possesses no lofty peaks to be scaled, the mountaineer can find no path into the clouds whence he can watch the first rays of the sun colouring with pink and blue the outposts from earth into heaven

But he can find other uses for his axe and rope, and can provide himself with as many dangers and as thrilling experiences as he can crowd into a day if he turns his steps downwards instead of upwards, into the darkness instead of into the light. The finest joys are to be obtained by the explorer only, who will climb by dark and secret pathways into the recesses of the nether world and thread his way through its unknown subterranean labyrinths. The music of the glacier finds its counterpart here too, as little streams gurgle along some even bed or dash in headlong

course down some pothole—here of rock instead of ice. Within the earth the sound of the waters echoes from side to side with deafening roar as they rush over their rocky bed, now forming a cascade down some giant's staircase, now a waterfall into a bottomless pit. So it has been through the countless ages, but there has been no ear to hear and no footstep to tread the unlit rocky paths.

The sport of cave-hunting is more modern than that of mountain-climbing, and in Western Europe at least has more to offer in the way of discovery, anyone, therefore, with the physical gifts of the mountaineer and a taste for exploration tinged with science can, in Belgium, combine sport and adventure, geology and natural history in any proportion that he may choose to select.

The districts for his efforts are the valleys of the Lesse and the Lomme, in the neighbourhood of Furfooz, Jemelle, Rochefort, Éprave, and Han, within thirty miles of the much-contested citadel of Namur and forty of the hive of industry at Liège. Even at Floreffe, less than six miles from Namur, the valley of the Sambre makes its contribution to the palaces of the nether world.

The Lesse it is that has provided the best-known theatre of caveland, and some of its underground mysteries—opened up to visitors now for a

hundred years or more—are among the marvels of Western Europe

We in England have our caves and underground world, too, but among all the beauties of the Pennines of Yorkshire, the Peak District of Derbyshire, and the Mendips of Somerset, including as they do the famous Cheddar Caverns, there is nothing to compare, in extent or variety, with the fascinating “Grottes de Han” In all these caves the story is the same—it is the story of water flowing in a limestone bed

The steep cliffs at Furfooz—almost perpendicular and bare—the “Chandelle,” and other curiosities in the rock formations at Chaleux, the rocks at Éprave, the quarry at Han, or the perpendicular escarpment at Belvaux, all show to the most casual glance that we are certainly in a limestone district Limestone here, as everywhere else, is built up in regular layers and cracked across in regular joints Thus the plateau is formed of a solid mass of huge blocks—a delightful playground for any trickling stream whose waters would percolate here, there, and everywhere through the crevices and cracks But the Lesse scenery has taken hundreds of thousands of years to carve, and takes us back to the time when the trickling streams of to day were roaring torrents and the tree-clad plateau was part of a great mountain ridge

Then the river, moving onwards, partly lost its waters down the cracks of the tilted layers and partly ate into the sides and bottom of its channel by means of swirling eddies laden with sand and stones. The work of the revolving stones in the rock was the same as we see it to-day on the glacier. It bored deeper and deeper till a great gulf swallowed the waters of the stream. Crevices were worn away underground into channels, weak spots in the channels were worked away into chasms. At last the pothole above was big enough to swallow all the stream, which thereupon left its channel in the open air, and its waters followed the subterranean passages only, carving huge chambers which steadily increased in size.

In this lower channel all the streamlets which had entered by other cracks and joints reunited and accumulated until some outlet was found on a lower side of the hill. The inside stream, however, was also on a limestone bed, so all the activities which it had shown before were now repeated till that course also was deserted, and swallets, channels, and passages led it still lower.

In the vaulted chambers the undermining of the sides led to the fall of great overhanging masses of rock, which, crashing down into the stream, were quickly broken up and carried on by the rushing waters. Sometimes the entire

vault of some chamber near the surface gave way, and left a sunken hole in the rock, or, if it were long, a ravine

On the imposing hill covering the famous labyrinth of caves and passages can be found a number of these deserted chambers or sinks. The Trou Sinsin is the largest in Belgium, and is now overgrown with all sorts of vegetation, but excavated enough to show its formation. Near by, the road to Auffe cuts through a tiny ravine whose sides rise steeply to the height of 180 feet.

The Lesse now descends into the mountain depths by the Gouffre de Belvaux—the gigantic swallet of its own making—having left its open course as soon as this pothole was big enough to take it. The abandoned course—the Chavee—is clear enough on the path from Han past the quarry. In the winter the Belvaux swallet, even with the assistance of other smaller fissures, is not big enough to engulf all the waters, so the Lesse divides itself into two arms, one subterranean and permanent, which runs through the labyrinth of the Han caves, the other in the open air and temporary, which runs round the great limestone hill to rejoin the permanent arm close to its exit at the Trou de Han.

The bare, steep rocks, the air of desolation, and the silent solitude of the Chavee, are fitting environment for the bed of a dead river. Inside



the Gouffre de Belvaux the river runs peaceably for a few yards, and then precipitates itself entirely into an unfathomable abyss. It is a scene of wonder and mystery, not unmixed with a suggestion of terror. No one has yet descended to the base of this pit, or been able to trace the subterranean path of the stream till it reappears under the vaulted roof of the "Salle d'Armes", but it is known that the water takes twenty-four hours over its journey.

It is not by the present route of the river, therefore, that we can get into the depths of the mountain, but by a cave above its old bed, known as the Trou du Salpêtre. Thence, led by guides carrying torches, you go from wonder to wonder, through narrow passages and enormous halls, decorated as only limestone caverns can be decorated, by pillars, draperies, and fantastic trophies of stalactitic crystal.

The rocks of Han have been so folded and twisted that the streams of the past had every variety of direction in carving their way by joint and crack, and so there is wonderful diversity in the form of the great caverns that they made. They are of every size and every shape (the Salle du Dôme is over 500 feet long by 450 feet wide), and the beauty of the stalactites baffles description.

The earthquake of 1828 brought down part of the vault of the Salle du Dôme, and gives a clue





*Photograph by A. Bailey*

to the formation of similar great caverns. It may also be added that the Perte de la Lesse at Belvaux is at an altitude of 567 feet, its emergence at 517 feet, and the hill above it is at heights varying between 700 and 900 feet. The roof of the Salle du Dôme is, therefore, not far from the surface, and the possibility is that one day an earthquake or other upheaval may cause its collapse and form a stupendous ravine. The majesty of this immense cavern is beyond all words, and it is upon the silent waters in its depths that one is taken out into the daylight once more.

The guides adopt a method of making one's last few moments in the depths of the earth as eerie as possible. They put out all lights but one candle. The boats, in which everyone embarks, glide almost silently along towards a tiny star which seems high above one.

That, however, is only an illusion. The star gradually grows and descends until it is only just ahead, and proves to be the opening into the light.

The exit from the cavern is one of the most wonderful experiences that anyone can have. It would seem that you have never really realized before what colour means in your life. For two hours you have been in darkness dimly broken by torch and lamp, now you emerge into a land of sunshine, where the green of the meadows

**CAVELAND OF BELGIUM    THE FASCINATION**

almost shines by the side of the sparkling stream,  
and the tiny flowers of red and yellow gleam as  
they never did before

Such is the story of Belgium's limestone wonder-  
land

**CHAPTER VI****TOWN LIFE**

WORKERS in the towns have no idle mornings beginning at half-past nine or ten. Eight o'clock marks the hour when shop and office begin to offer their contributions to a busy world. Compensation is bought in the summer by a good rest at noon, when the business men return to their families and quite often close their shop or office for a couple of hours. Business women are far more frequently found than with us. Belgian women take work as part of their duty in life, their aim is to enrich the world they live in by the fruit of their labour, not to idle away the hours and live upon the labour of others. There is thus a whole-heartedness about their work which distinctly adds to the moral standard of the nation.

Domestic servants are far more industrious in Belgium than in England. From six in the morning till nine at night a "general" will devote herself to her work for as little as £15 a year. She will do her work well, too,

and without presenting a rising demand for "days out" She will, in fact, be quite happy with her Sunday evenings, and her highest hopes are attained if she can accompany her young man to a public dance once in six months, it is customary, too, for her to go home to her native village when it celebrates its annual fête

In the shops women play an important part There is a feeling that it is not very dignified for a man to be a mere shopman, even if the shop is his own So it frequently happens that he finds something more manly to do, and that his wife looks after the shop, where she is helped by her children or any other members of the family who are available Of course, it all depends upon the business itself Naturally, in the big businesses of the principal towns men play their prominent and leading part as elsewhere in the world

It is from work in the big towns that the men return to their homes in the middle of the day, and the train service is so cheap that work and home can be many miles apart The season tickets, *abonnements*, are the cheapest in Europe, and can be taken out for as little as five days With a payment of about 3s 6d a workman can live twenty miles away, and make the double journey every day for a week Any sudden demand for workers at any particular place can thus easily be met, and Liège can, if necessary,



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draw labour from Brussels or Ghent In fact, some thousands of its workmen do travel as much as or more than thirty miles from their homes

The tickets for students, too, are very cheap, and many a young man can live at home and travel in to his University who would find the expense of residence in college too heavy Thus a student from Malines can go into Brussels every day for a sum of £4 10s a year, though the distance is sixteen miles This will entitle him to ride in a second-class carriage, and he can at will use the south station in Brussels, which adds on another four miles Nothing comparable with this exists in England, though it is open to doubt if English students would as readily avail themselves of the privilege as the Belgians But the Belgian is quite content to catch a train every morning about seven o'clock to reach Brussels in time for his eight o'clock lecture

Belgium, like France, possesses a number of what are known as light railways, and probably the best known is the one running along the coast, connecting Ostend with the east and west Its engine used to puff out masses of smoke, but now it works electrically The train exhibits no tendency to race any other train, and the position of the line behind the dunes provides rather a monotonous outlook, yet the convenience of this and the other similar lines is very great Then

innumerable wayside stops make them of great value to small market gardeners who sometimes fill up half the carriage with huge baskets of fresh flowers and vegetables which they balance on their knees

There always is a rather predominating amount of luggage in a Belgian railway-carriage, and the Englishman, thinking of the happy-go-lucky system at home, wonders why the Belgian travellers do not put their luggage in the van. But putting your luggage in the van there is not a matter of a label and a tip, it is always a matter of negotiation and sometimes of diplomacy. The luggage must be registered. It must have a number, and so must its owner, and if the owner loses that number, there is a prolonged dealing with intricate officialism before the luggage is given up. Before you start on your journey, however, you must spend a long time in getting your number, for the luggage must be weighed, and after that a young man sits down and works out a sum. It always appears to be a long sum in spite of the decimal system, and if, as you watch the time drift by, you feel inclined to express impatience, it is wise to curb that inclination, the young man will not be hurried, and if you miss your train that is your affair.

While negotiations are in progress with respect to your luggage, you will have plenty of time to





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COSSIE AND WORK *Iaf 5*

familiarize yourself with the railway clock, whose dial shows twenty four hours instead of twelve This has many advantages, and prevents all confusion between a m and p m in the timetable

There are also two kinds of porters, which institution is embarrassing and expensive There is the railway official who deals with your luggage as long as it is in the possession of the railway, and not one yard will he move it outside that State jurisdiction, then for the purely personal attention you must turn to a blue-garbed *facteur* in peaked cap and linen blouse, who, to a dejected foreigner, protests his trustworthiness by pointing to his badge of office and metal number It is true that he rules you with a tariff and then expects a tip, but he is honest and helpful, and, moreover, exhibits a polite patience as you practise upon him your best—or worst—experimental French

It is astonishing how many people on the railway there are to be tipped They are all officers of the State, and, like officers of the State all the world over, expect to be treated with deference, that, however, does not hinder them from taking a tip, which fact they give you to understand from the beginning If you have not sufficiently grasped the fact on a journey, Monsieur le Conducteur (who is really nothing more than the

guard) comes to visit you in your carriage with the remark that he will be quitting you and the train at the next station

The person you feel (perhaps unjustly) that you cannot tip is the Chef de Gare, but he is so resplendant in his brilliant uniform and gold braid that he seems to correspond to nothing less exalted in this country than a Colonel on parade. He is not to be lightly approached with questions about trains, platforms, and luggage, his appearance grows if possible even more imposing as he lets you understand this, not so much by words as by looks. Should you, however, be in real difficulty, and approach him with humility and deference prefaced by an ingratiating "Pardon, Monsieur," he will unbend, and if he does not settle all your difficulties himself, he will indicate the particular official (probably the Sous-Chef) who will

The tipping extends even to the tram-men and postmen. The tram conductor is in no great hurry to return you a five-centime-piece as change, for as often as not he is allowed to keep that for himself. The postman, too, will have a real grievance against you if he has brought you a registered letter (and he will search you out in an upper flat) and you forget to reward him for his trouble. To him a registered letter must be a covering for wealth, and it is but just that he







*Photograph by A. Bailey*  
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who brings it to you should share in the riches, if only to the extent of a few *sous*

He is by no means averse to taking his reward in liquid form, and in some business houses a special bottle is kept for the purpose. It is true that he never arrives burdened with enormous parcels, but there seems almost no limit to the amount that can be sent about as *imprimé*. The postage for all printed papers is very cheap: a newspaper costs only one centime (one-tenth of a penny), and the same amount covers about an ounce and a quarter of any other printed matter. As architects' drawings come under this regulation, and a great deal can be sent for a penny, the postman is often seen staggering along with great rolls of papers—looking in the distance like some lonely bagpiper.

In the matter of true parcels, however, he is protected. The post will only take quite small packets under its wing. Should you wish to send a wedding present of a silver teapot to your friend, it is not to the post, but to the more comprehensive care of the railway, that you must confide it. And it is then well to allow considerable margin in the matter of days, for the railway is apt to be deliberate with its parcels, and to be untroubled by the passage of time.

One of the greatest differences between the appearance of a Belgian and an English street is

the prevalence of little carts drawn by dogs, and to some people this appears cruel. But it must be remembered at the same time that the dogs are carefully protected by law and are regularly inspected. If their harness chafes them, or if they are ill-fed, the owner does not escape the responsibility. In the hot weather the dog will carry his own drinking-bowl and a piece of carpet whereon he can rest.

The dogs which are employed are of a strong and powerful breed, and they are used not only for the milk-carts, but for bakers' and vegetable carts as well, thus replacing to a large extent the donkeys of our big cities.

Brussels is often described as Paris in miniature, its great boulevards, its mansions of flats, and its shops recalling those of Paris in many details. The life there is similar, too—the open-air cafes, the little tables on the pavement, the gaiety of the work-girls in their short hours of relief. The busy *patronne* of the French cafés is exactly reproduced in the cafés of Brussels and Antwerp, where as little escapes her eye as escapes that of her French sister. Orders and payments pass equally through her hands, and to her organization is due the efficiency of the café. There may be men waiters, but the ruling spirit is the proprietor's wife or sister.

The lace-workers of the big firms, the dress-

makers, and the milliners are a neat and cheerful set of people, getting much pleasure from their life of toil, and adding a touch of vivacity and brightness to the streets when they emerge at the sound of the bell. They entirely lack the dragged appearance as also the vulgarity of some of our own workers.

Outside the big towns, and in some of the quiet streets of the little ones, the lace-makers can be seen at their industry at home. Go down some of the cobbled streets of Bruges and you will find them sitting at their doorways getting all the light they can for their rather trying work, but ready to look up with a smile as they hear a neighbour's footstep approach when she clatters in her sabots across the rough uneven stones.

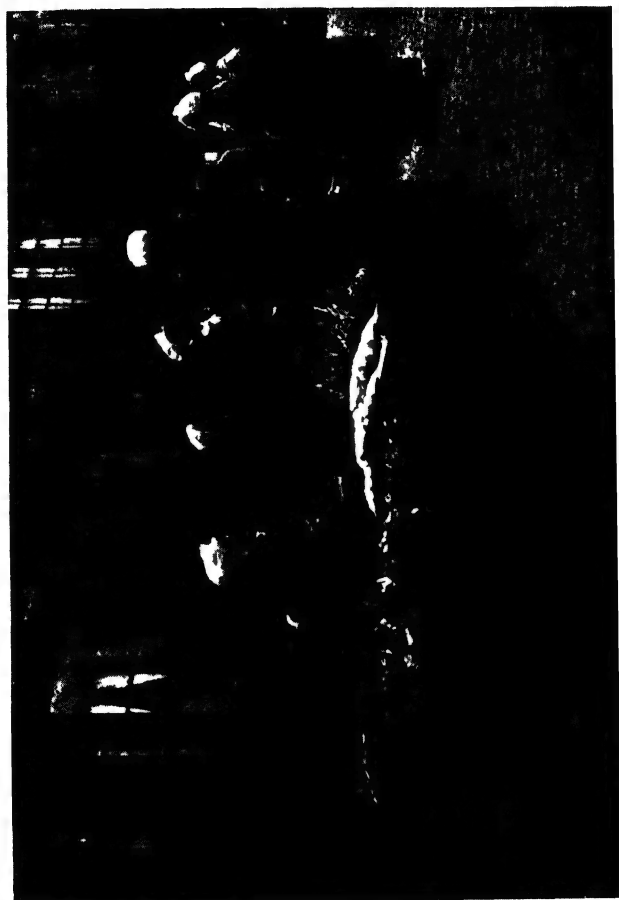
The open markets are a special joy. The flowers in the Grand' Place at Brussels, the fruit and vegetables in the "Places" at Malines or Antwerp, and the fish at Bruges or Brussels, are a source of profit to both the eye and the purse. Nowhere are these first necessities of life to be had so cheaply, and nowhere are fish and vegetables so fresh. London cannot compare with Brussels in either of these respects.

Everyone buys these articles in the open market or from some market cart on its travels direct from the fields. There is immense advantage to all from this system, and it is one of the great things

that makes living much cheaper in Belgium than in England. Wages are not very high, the lace-makers, for example, seldom earning more than about £1 a week, but the care and thrift added to these advantages of cheap living make the money go far.

The housewives of the middle classes, too, are imbued with the same ideals of thrift and economy. There is no waste of food from habit, and both Walloon and Fleming know their business too well to waste from ignorance.

They are simple, too, in their ways of living. Contrast their light repasts with the heavy meals of their eastern neighbours, and if you want to mark the contrast in the amount they eat, watch them at some hotel at Blankenberghe or Heyst sitting at one of the long tables with a German family opposite.





**CHAPTER VII****THE ANCIENT TOWNS**

THE moment you have left Ostend and her sister Plages behind, and cut through those lines of yellow dunes, you leave the present to enter the past. Only ten miles away is the town of Bruges, in many ways the most wonderful city in Europe. Bruges is only one of a group of towns which are all fascinating in the same way—Ghent, Ypres, Brussels, Antwerp.

The gaiety and attractions of Belgium's seaboard Plages can be matched elsewhere—at Boulogne, Dieppe, or Deauville, for example—but the special attractions of her medieval cities are to be found nowhere else, though with the ones mentioned above must be classed those others in northern France, such as St Omer or Douai, which used to be under the rule of the Counts of Flanders.

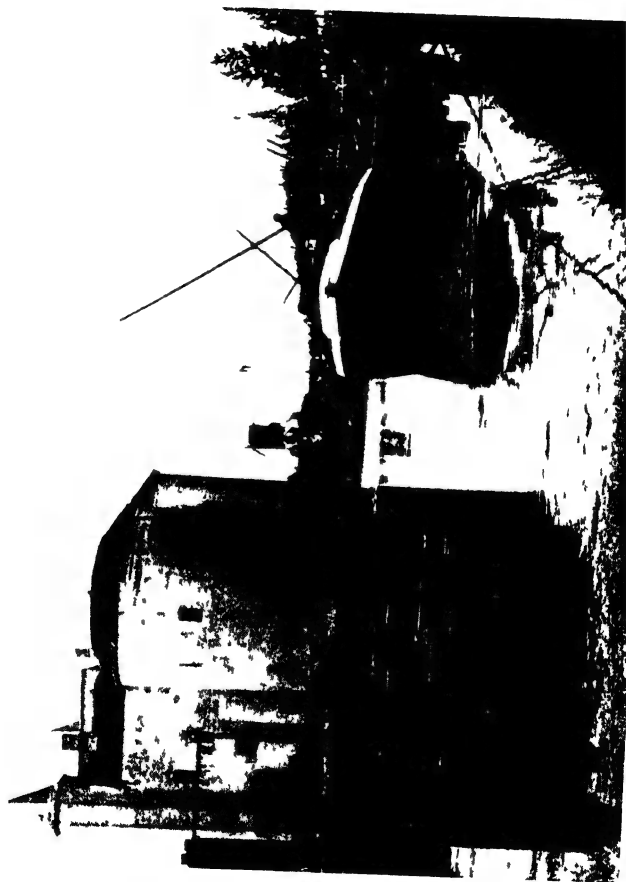
The beautiful old towns of Belgium existed from the tenth century or before, but their growth into the cities which we now think of and know took place gradually through many centuries, and especially in the fourteenth



It was to commerce that they owed their birth, and they sprang up in positions suitable above all for the transport of merchandise, positions, that is, settled by nature, and depending on the relief of the land, the direction of the valleys and the coast-line. Bruges grew up at the head of a sea-inlet, Nieuport and Antwerp on river estuaries, Ghent and Namur at the confluence of two rivers. Others, again, adorned the banks of any river whose waters were deep enough for the barges, so Malines arose on the Dyle, Liege, Huy, and Dinant on the Meuse.

On the great road leading from France to the north of Flanders grew up Arras and Ypres, while Brussels and Louvain were established on the line between Bruges and Cologne, just where the Senne and Dyle ceased to be navigable, for boats had of necessity to be unloaded there. Nature pointed out the spots, men followed the way.

To trace the very beginnings of the towns we must go back to the ninth or tenth century, when all the land was in the hands of a powerful aristocracy. There was nothing to sell except an occasional superabundance of some produce. It might be that the vineyards of the Count produced rather more wine than could be drunk in the castle even in those days, or a salt of local occurrence exceeded the needs of those near at hand. So there grew up a sort of traffic in such things,





and a feeble export of such products of rural industry as the friezes of Flanders

These goods were dealt with by "merchants of occasion," men who in the pursuit of adventure took up anything that helped them along. They were often half-traders, half-pirates, and not infrequently blended commerce with plunder.

In the trifling matter of a leaning towards plunder they differed little from their neighbours.

Sometimes the great landowners made their own servants or "ministerials" do their little buying and selling, but gradually the enterprise fell into the hands of travelling merchants. These men, being without land, were outside the regular social classifications, they could only mix with masters of barges or drivers of waggons.

Gradually, however, commercial intercourse produced groups of importance at certain places which provided wharves for merchandise and winter quarters for boats and boatmen. This floating population had no privileges, and lived in houses which were practically little better than wooden sheds. That was in the ninth century, but by the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century there was a great increase in commercial activity. Bruges on the estuary of the Zwyn became the centre of navigation which radiated towards England, North Germany, and Scandinavia.

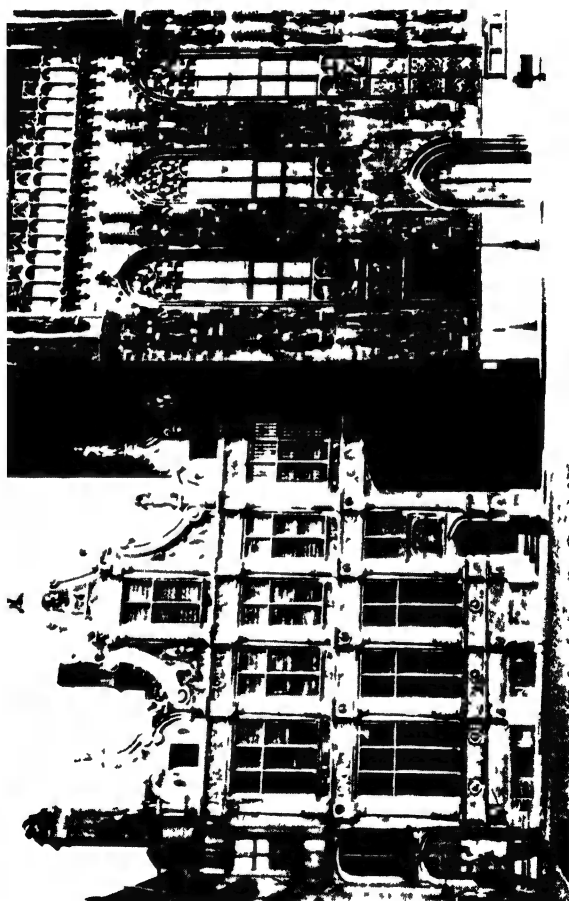
Economic life thus won its way along the rivers and natural routes, and in the twelfth century, when the Lombard merchants from the passes of the Alps reached the valleys of Meuse and Scheldt, North and South Europe met in the fairs of Flanders. From this time onwards the gathering place of merchants at fixed points in their travels resulted in much more important and stable collections of men than those of the ninth century.

Before this there had been no municipal life, the town—if one could call it a town—consisted of Count or Bishop, clerics and monks, some artisans and serfs. The chief break in their modest existence had been a weekly market of necessities, while wilder excitement was provided by an occasional fair, visited by budding merchant adventurers.

Now, the increasing intensity of commerce furnished new means of existence, and then, as now, men rushed to avail themselves of them. They were attracted to the points where the handling of merchandise or towing of boats provided two important fields for their labour in the service of the merchants.

The newcomers grouped themselves in colonies under the walls of some castle or Bishop's palace, and were sometimes rather scathingly referred to as "suburban," or *bourgeoise*, by the former inhabitants—the nobles, clergy, and knights, with





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the hundreds of workers and serfs who surrounded them. The "suburban" immigrants were, however, very much in their midst, as you can see from the names and buildings still remaining.

At Bruges they spread themselves at the foot of the Bourg or fortress, inside which was St Donatian's Church, as well as the treasure-house and granaries of the governing count. Although the old Palais of the Counts of Flanders has long since passed away and been replaced by the Palais de Justice, and although St Donatian's Cathedral has been demolished, yet the Bourg is still the centre of the city. St Donatian has remained only as a name and a memory, as the Patron Saint of Bruges, traces of him carrying his wheel with five lighted candles are occasionally met with.

Cambrai and Douai—then in Belgium—show similar growth. At Cambrai the incomers kept close to the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace, and the monastery of St Aubert, at Douai they wedged themselves in between the castle of the Prince and the buildings of the already numerous townsmen.

There were plenty of other castles and Bishops' palaces all over the country, with townlets of their retainers and workers, but those only grew into great towns whose position marked them out on the commercial highways.



The *bourgeoise* was a transplanted population, and it largely consisted of wandering beings ready to take anything that turned up if it promised well. The very fact that they struck out a new line for themselves showed that they were men of intelligence. Brains, in those days as in these, gravitated to the towns.

Men, too, rose from nothing then as they do now. It is a common story to read how some pedlar, travelling with his pack, gathered a small sum for himself in the course of a year or two, and with this was able to prove himself a desirable—or, if the sum was not large, tolerated—addition to a troupe of merchants going from town to town and fair to fair. His goal was straight in front of him: it was to associate with other merchants in chartering a boat with which he could engage in a coasting trade. After that his success was assured, and he became wealthy. His wealth, too, was useful wealth, wherein it differed from that of the old landed gentry, whose wealth, economically considered, was idle.

To our sporting merchant the town was merely a basis of operations and a winter retreat. As soon as the roads and seas were open he set out on his travels of adventure. Adventures he found, too, for many dangers lurked on the roads. The travellers, therefore, for mutual protection banded themselves together into associations called

“Guilds” or “Hanses,” went in convoys from town to town, and generally divided their profits

These merchants of the Belgian towns largely dealt in wine, grain, wool, and cloth. They were the exporters and importers of their day, and with the true spirit of the wholesale traders they turned up their noses at anything retail.

No retail dealer or craftsman was allowed to be a member of their select Guild.

The merchant associations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were, as we see, essentially non-local, their members belonged to several towns, but all were free in the towns so long as they paid their fiscal dues to the territorial prince at the harbours, rivers, roads, and bridges. The old *tonlieu* (the toll-house) at Bruges still stands to remind us of those dues.

There were comparatively few towns which, like Bruges, attracted a very large number of merchants, so those who centred their trade in smaller localities were always anxious to affiliate themselves to the Guild or Hanse of the nearest big town. Thus, the merchants of Dixmude, Damme, and Oudenbourg, sought admission into the Guild of Bruges.

At this time it is to be remembered that the towns were commercial and not industrial. Merchant exporters of cloth did not then find it made in Bruges, they collected it from the surrounding

country The merchants had their adventures, their losses, and their gains, but their gains were sufficiently great to have raised them into a wealthy class by the twelfth century—a class, moreover, owning land in the towns Newcomers to the towns provided a fresh source of income in the rent they were only too ready to offer for the convenience of a plot of ground near the central Bourg The merchants built themselves great houses of stone, and from their battlements were able to overlook the wooden houses of their tenants

From being non-local and wandering, they became intensely local and fixed Like the wealthy traders of other lands and other times—our own certainly included—they aspired to marry into the ranks of the lesser nobility, and they aimed at monopolizing the position of alderman, hitherto only held by the landed nobility They succeeded in the Flemish towns where the Count was accommodating, and ready enough to ratify their choice of these magistrates, but it was a different matter in towns like Liège, under a Prince Bishop Merchants and burghers could clamour as they would, but his resident lordship took good care to appoint the aldermen-magistrates himself He felt more sure then that the burghers would be kept on a stricter path of righteousness So in the Flemish towns,



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though not in the ecclesiastical cities, the great Merchant Guild flourished and grew, and after first winning "recognition" from the higher powers, it went on, first assuming more powers, and then getting these powers ratified by charters. St Omer, now in France, managed to get one of the earliest of these documents before the end of the eleventh century. The entire merchants of the town were united, they had a dean, a notary, and wardens, of their own, and, what they doubtless valued still more, a Guild Hall where they could meet. It must not be forgotten that the hardships involved in the strenuous labour of debate on all matters belonging to the Guild were tempered by the joys of the wine-cup. The roads and waterways brought along practical reason for many an evening meeting.

The Guild in each city was wealthy. It possessed virtuous and industrious members who amassed riches, and erring brethren who paid fines. Each after their kind benefited their fraternity. So the Guild often took over duties belonging to the whole town—built ramparts, paved the streets, repaired the market squares.

Sometimes, too, the hall put up by the Guild became later the Hotel de Ville, or Town Hall. In fact, the Guild exercised an enormous power, was an element of order, discipline, and progress, and the merchant colony practically formed a

town on its own account, surrounded with protective walls or ditches. With market, Guild Hall, and chapel, it soon became a sort of self-sufficient section, or *bourg*—no longer open to all who cared to come in. It was from the name *nouveau-bourg*, distinguishing their locality in some towns from the primitive *vieux-bourg*, which existed before, that the merchant colonies acquired their name of *bourgeois*.

When the merchants were specially harassed by the tolls (which they regarded as an unjust exploitation of commerce), and their hatred turned upon the *tonlieu*, which to them symbolized exactions in general and their own in particular, they met in their Guild Halls, and the brothers of the Guild formulated their wants. Then, as now and all through the ages, these were summed up as a demand for "liberty"—in reality, the rights of the new instead of the rights of the old.

The Flemish princes had the extreme good sense to realize that the Guild only really asked for reasonable concessions—at least in the early days—and that the granting of these would enrich the towns, and incidentally enlarge their own coffers, so they granted privileges by various charters. Amongst other concessions which the Guild in many places obtained was the permission to collect the tolls, and its members were relieved from the duty of supplying an army for foreign







ENTRANCE TO THE FOURTH, OF OLD CUSTOM HOUSE, FUNCHAL  
*Funchal, Madeira*

service. More important still, the Guild was allowed to make and administer its own laws. So all was well with the merchants under the Counts of Flanders.

Although the Merchant Guild, being very wealthy, was very important, and had great influence in the Town and its Council, it was by no means identical with the Town, nor were their interests always the same, especially when the towns were at or past the height of their prosperity. Sometimes they united in the pursuit of a single aim, as in crushing inconvenient bands of workmen, but finally the Town sought to limit the power of the Guild, and, in the end, destroyed it.

While the merchants had been increasing in wealth and numbers, the growing towns began to attract rural artisans, and many of these getting raw materials from the surrounding country began to devote themselves to certain industries, especially cloth-making and metal-working.

The towns then began to change, and from being purely commercial, gradually took on an industrial aspect.

Even by the twelfth century the power of the town itself was so strong that the Flemish towns were able to interfere in the nomination of the Counts of Flanders, a matter supposed to rest entirely with the Kings of France. For instance,

after the death of Count Charles the Good, who left no direct heir, they took a most lively interest in his possible successors

The chosen of France was William of Normandy (not the Conqueror, of course), and to him went representatives of the Flemish cities to explain to him that they would not accept him unless he would ratify all their back charters. He was ready to ratify anything to get Flanders, he even said they could coin their own money (an extra concession, which they put in as a "try on," but probably never expected to obtain)

Unfortunately, William was one of those who would promise anything with the calm intention of backing out when the time came. He did not, however, know the Flemish burghers. As soon as they found out what he meant to do they dared to take up arms against him. Merchants and craftsmen from Bruges and Ghent, aided by free peasants from the coast, ranged themselves against the military aristocracy of barons and knights. They won, too, and put their own candidate, Thierry (or Derick) of Alsace, at the head of their county. It was this Derick who founded the Chapelle du Saint-Sang at Bruges to enshrine the drops of the Holy Blood which he brought back from the Holy Land in 1149

Derick and all his House loyally kept to their ideal of promoting the prosperity of their towns. In spite of their difference of speech and customs, the Flemish cities of Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres formed, with the Walloon cities of Arras, Lille, and Douai (now France), a sort of great family, each town possessing similar rights, and being on equal terms with the Count. The Charter of Arras was the foundation of the rights of all. Arras was then their chief town, and defaulters from the other towns could be brought before the Aldermen of Arras if the Count feared false judgments elsewhere.

The Dukes of Brabant followed the lead of the Counts of Flanders rather later, so Brussels, Louvain, and Antwerp received their communal privileges half a century afterwards. The Brabant towns, however, never formed quite the same united family as those of Flanders.

It is worth while taking a glimpse of Bruges at the height of her power, when she guarded within her walls the banks and agencies of seventeen foreign nations, and provided residence for twenty Consuls. In any single day 150 foreign vessels entered the heart of the city, and the Easterlings—as the German merchants of the Hanseatic League were called—bought 2,600 pieces of cloth, made by the looms of Poperinghe and Tourcoing, for exportation to Poland and Moscow. It is

pleasant to recall the fact that Bruges was one of the cities in which the German merchants had to restrain their arrogance and behave themselves, as they also had to do in London, but as they certainly did not do in Bergen

The city presented a wonderful scene of animation, streets and quays were crowded with an immense concourse of people, amongst whom were merchants and traders from every corner of Europe. All were engaged in a battle of commerce, and each man clamoured for attention and preference. There were to be found the sellers of hemp, Dutch flax, English wool, Spanish skins and leather, Italian silk, the cloth and linen of Brabant and Flanders, the wines of Portugal, Greece, and France, the hardware of Germany, and other articles made of horn, ivory, wood, of glass, iron, pewter, copper, brass, silver, or gold. In the centre of the throng were the rich merchants of the Hanseatic League, resplendent in costume, and wearing the arms of their powerful society, while on the fringe of the market stretched an unbroken line of money-changers, upon whose tables gleamed the coins of every possible country.

The population of the city was then creeping up towards a quarter of a million souls, and about 50,000 workmen were engaged in the manufacture of woollen cloth.

Bruges was aptly called the Venice of the

## **OF BELGIUM**

### **THE ANCIENT TOWNS**

North, situated on an arm of the sea as the other Venice is on its lagoon, both equally glorying in their artistic splendours, and concentrating in their midst the commerce of the whole world, which cast into her keeping the riches of Europe, Africa, and Asia

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE GROWTH OF THE CRAFT GUILDS

EVEN in the days when the towns were in their infancy—when, in fact, they were citadels rather than towns—necessities of life had of course to be provided for. If goldsmiths catered for the lords, and blacksmiths for the horses of his men, butchers, bakers, and carpenters were necessary alike for high and low.

It was, then, natural that men of similar craft should hold together—butcher met butcher in friendly alliance, blacksmith met blacksmith. In fact, there was a tendency for one trade to inhabit a particular street or quarter of the town, and as the town grew by the immigration of numbers from outside, so the members of each trade flocked to the particular quarter where that trade was already established.

With the growth of the woollen industry, immense numbers of craftsmen were employed in different parts of the work, so that it is specially they who exhibit this grouping together at its best. How much this was the case can be seen

from the record that on Good Friday, 1405, when a great fire broke out in the weavers' quarter of Brussels, 1,100 of their homes and 4,000 of their members were burnt to death. The fullers took up their abode at a new end of the town, and to this day the street of Terre-Neuve recalls them. Similarly, too, La Rue des Tanneurs is a relic of the quarter where the tanners installed themselves. The goldsmiths, blacksmiths, makers of armour and spears, all clustered together near the centre of the town, for their numbers did not cause them to spread over more spacious ground, and the Rues de l'Orfèvre, Armuriers, and so on, signify the homes of each.

So, too, the Rue des Rôtisseurs in Antwerp and the Rue aux Laines in Bruges still testify to the trades of the workers and their dwellings in far-off times.

This grouping of the different crafts in a special corner of their own was really the first step towards combination, the men led the same life, they had the same interests to defend. Gradually the defence of these trade interests became a general obligation, and the loose union of men of the same trade formed the foundation of the Craft Guilds. Not that their growth into real corporations was a simple, easy, or speedy matter.

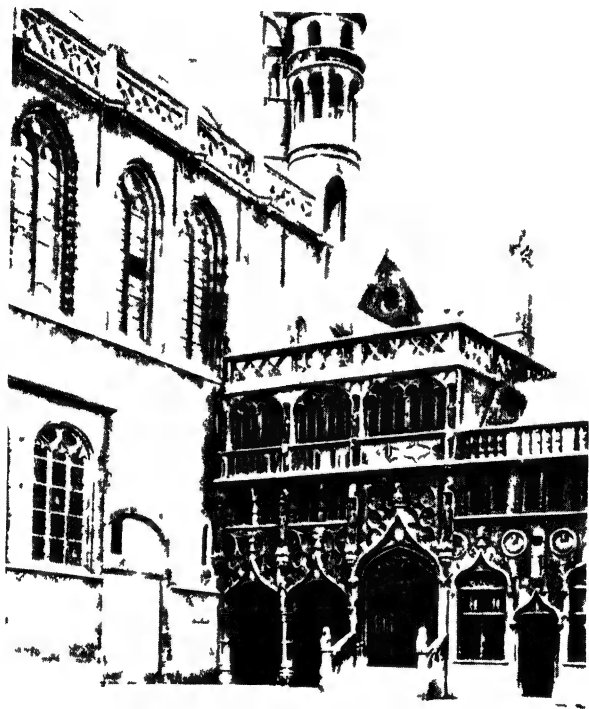
We are apt to think nowadays that organizations of traders, whether Guilds, companies, or trade



unions, have only one aim—to promote the development of their trade, and to increase their worldly goods in proportion. But if we look back we find that that was by no means the case in olden days, and nowhere is it better shown than in Belgium, where the records of ancient charters and documents have been not only preserved, but made available by the splendid activity of modern Belgian historians.

In very early times no meetings of men other than religious meetings were allowed, so we have to remember that every association must have started life as a religious association. Its members met for avowed religious purposes, and gradually took to themselves the duties of a friendly society, or possibly a burial club, and gained slight concessions from the ruling Aldermen of the city for the exercise of different religious rites.

Before the fourteenth century it is quite difficult to tell which groups of the population existed for a religious purpose alone, and which were the founders of a future trade guild. Many of them were termed brotherhoods (*confréries*) or charities (*charités*). Some, like the Bogard Brothers, a mendicant order of monks, were so largely recruited from one craft that it was practically a praying society of weavers, and in later times the brothers of its Bruges house added to their religious duties the secular ones of teaching weaving.



LA CHATELLE DU SAINT SAUVEUR. — P. 10



When, however, the working groups began to show that they were progressing towards a real union with a definite constitution, up rose all the wealth and power of the city to prevent it

The wealth and power of the city may be briefly summed up as the Aldermen—all of noble birth—and the Merchant Guild, all wealthy, many patrician, and some also Aldermen

What could any combination of craftsmen do against such redoubtable opposition as these could offer? For it must be remembered that the Merchant Guild had the actual power of making laws, and enforcing them by means of what was practically a law court. The Guild was chiefly composed of cloth merchants, for the making of woollen cloth was the chief industry to which the growing wealth of the Belgian towns was due, hence the Guild claimed jurisdiction over all the workers of cloth—spinners, weavers, fullers, dyers, and so on—comprising by far the largest groups of workers in the cities

Even the sisters of the Béguinage in Brussels were put under the rule of the Guild by the City Aldermen because they busied themselves with woollen work. The soft-voiced Béguines, who now inhabit the peaceful convents at Ghent or Bruges, can tell of very different and more strenuous times in their life before the thirteenth century was out

It was no use for a weaver artisan to try to belong to this Guild, not only was the entrance-fee very high, but the merchants had ordained that no one who worked with his hands was to be admitted. That was, in fact, one of their most solemn rules.

So the artisans could get no power in that way. Hence, with all these opponents, recognized union was impossible. Even the fishmongers, who seem to have been early in the field, had by the end of the thirteenth century only the vaguest co-operative mind, though things were very different with them half a century later. In Brussels, for instance, they wanted a market, and the Duke of Brabant, in arranging to let them have it, dealt with a number of single fishmongers in their personal names. By the time the fourteenth century was two-thirds past the fishmongers elected representatives, who signed contracts in the name of their craft.

Where the fishmongers led, butchers followed; and, indeed, the whole of the crafts of Brussels were soon organized under their Guild-Masters and an elected Council. There were thirty-six groups of these Craft Guilds in Brussels, several of them were small and united together. Brussels was not so early in the field of progress as Bruges, for it was always the case that Flanders led and Brabant followed, and, indeed, it was

owing to the action of the artisans of Ghent and Bruges that the Crafts could organize themselves at all. For the weavers of Ghent and Bruges showed their mettle when outside the walls of Courtrai, in 1302, they routed the Knighthood and Chivalry of France, capturing from them 700 golden spurs, which were hung up as trophies in the monastery near, and on account of which the fight has been remembered as the Battle of the Spurs.

Weavers who can fight knights and beat them are men to be treated with respect, so this Battle of the Spurs marked a point in the history of industrial freedom, and not only secured the Flemish towns against French aggression, but enabled the craftsmen to insist on being recognized in their turn. The Bruges Crafts, for example, after this battle were allowed to elect nine members to represent them on the City Council.

But Bruges and Antwerp had a set back, Guild and Duke combined in 1306 to prevent all meetings of the trades, and to forbid all collections of money among themselves. The mendicant friars were forbidden to speak, for who knew whether a poor friar was not a weaver in a different coat? In fact, even the Dominicans, coming to Brussels armed with letters from the Pope, were sent away by the magistrate.

It was the same at Bruges, Ghent, and Louvain—the Merchant Guild and the patrician Aldermen suppressed all meetings of the craftsmen and took away their subscriptions. As for strikes, they were absolutely forbidden. Town and town also agreed between themselves to support each other, and send back fugitive workmen.

One by one, however, the Craft corporations received recognition chastened by regulations. In Brussels it was the coiners of money and jewellers who first worked upon the Duke's feelings, and were allowed to hold meetings and elect their chiefs. They graded themselves into Masters, Companions, and Apprentices, settled and collected their own fines, and judged defaulters. Most important of all, they settled the conditions of apprenticeship.

It is interesting to note that these *confréries* obtained their charters, not from the Aldermen of the town, not by concessions from the Guild, but direct from the ruling power—in this case the Duke of Brabant. Dukes and Counts had their good uses, frequently they stood for the rights of men other than the Guild Merchants and the Town Councils. When in doing so they opposed these Councils (who liked to consider themselves as "the town"), "the town" accused the ruler of using his power against progress, and so denying their liberty. But the liberty of the Town Council

was by no means always the same thing as the liberty of the more obscure and modest dwellers under its control, as the Count or Duke quite well knew, and to the credit of the Ducal Princes, be it said, they often acted upon that knowledge

Coopers and cabinet makers, carpenters and boatmen, followed each other in demanding charters of Duke or Aldermen, until gradually practically all the trades had their recognized Guilds. The trades, however, which had been regulated by the Merchant Guild—that is, all the workers in wool (spinners, weavers, fullers, shearers, embroiderers, carpet-makers, and so on)—were long in freeing themselves from it, although they wrested concessions one by one. One point shows humanity the same all the world over and through all time—the very weavers of wool who had fought so hard against the Guild in order that they might control their own affairs joined with that same Guild in Brussels in 1421 in opposing the independence of the weavers of linen.

When once the Craft Guilds had control of money in the shape of subscriptions, fines, and apprenticeship fees, they were able to make their existence felt in many ways. One of their earliest needs was the provision of a meeting-place. At first they hired a room, sometimes here, sometimes



there, and whenever a meeting was called, the place as well as the hour had to be mentioned. Certain crafts met at a monastery or a hospital. The cobblers of Brussels, for instance, held their meetings at the convents of the Frères-Mineurs, and the bleachers in the Carmelite cloisters.

The goldsmiths of Brussels, being among the earliest in obtaining a charter of recognition from the Duke, were also among the first to possess a house of their own. Here they met and kept, not only their own archives, but also the archives of the group of Craft Guilds (called "nations" in Brussels), of which they were one, which sent a representative to the City Council.

The wool-weavers took a house next to the house of the Bogard Brothers, but, unfortunately, when the woollen industry began to decline they had to give it up because they could not pay the rent.

One by one all the crafts installed themselves in houses of their own. When the town of Brussels was bombarded by the French in 1695, the cabinet-makers occupied the house known as Le Sac, on the Grand' Place, the tailors Le Taupe, the mercers Le Renard, while the millers were close by.

The bombardment, however, set fire to the centre of the town and destroyed the old Guild houses. On the ruins the present incomparable

## **OF BELGIUM**

### **THE CRAFT GUILDS**

Grand' Place was constructed The crafts spent themselves on the luxury and decoration which they considered as their due on account of their ancient existence and their present dignity They built palaces, but ruined themselves

They were never able to pay the huge debts which they incurred, and the gold of the façades would now seem only a remaining mockery of the imaginary riches of the vanished Guilds

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RELIGIOUS ORIGIN OF THE GUILDS

THE religious origin of the Guilds persisted all through the centuries, and has shown itself in all sorts of curious ways. There were, for instance, ceremonies of initiation in the old religious foundations, and these were still kept up, surrounded with their halo of secrecy. This secrecy, which was necessary before the thirteenth century, when meetings of all sorts were discouraged, was maintained afterwards because of its tradition. It will readily occur to everyone to think of the Masons' Guild, with its curious modern persistence, as an instance where religious ceremony and secret ritual have kept their hold on its members.

But other Guilds besides the Masons have kept up ceremonies of initiation. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that some of these ceremonies still, or till recently, held in Scotland are exactly equivalent to those of the old Flemish Guilds, emphasizing once more the fact that Flanders and Brabant were the home of all industrial traditions. The Edinburgh Guilds openly





COTTAGE HOUSES AT THE CATTLE MARKET, YORK

*Pages 78 and 111*

## OF BELGIUM

### ORIGIN OF THE GUILDS

admitted that they had copied those of Bruges, and a weaver in Perth was known as a Brabanter in the seventeenth century

Amongst the archives of the Guilds in the different Belgian towns were, of course, all their minutes, regulations, and charters. Some of the regulations were enlightening.

There was, for instance, the idea that all the members of a Guild should be well-behaved

There must always have been a subtle temptation to the use of bad language in the profession of waterman or bargee; and that this was not limited to those frequenting the watersides of the Thames and the Mersey can be seen from the rule made by the brothers of the *batehiers* that no boatman was to swear or stamp on the road. If he persisted he was turned out from his craft. There must have been a great deal of change of personnel among the watermen as the years went on.

It would appear, too, that the sailors gave as much trouble in this respect as the watermen, for their Guilds both at Namur and Liège had to deal with many complaints, and in 1596 it was represented that the daily speech of these unbridled sailors contained such execrable oaths that their fellow-citizens could not put up with it any longer.

Many were the rules made for the preservation

of order at the meetings of the Guilds and for good behaviour in the streets, and if the meetings sometimes allowed their differences of opinion to lead to a faction fight (and rioting was not unknown in the streets), still the general trend of the Guilds' influence was towards brotherly support, combined with some rudimentary sentiments of honour. The brotherly support was sometimes very practically expressed. A boatman in Namur, for instance, was expected by his Guild to help any other boatman to moor his boat at the quay.

The rites of marriage and the rites of death were, of course, occasions of religious expression, and the Guilds, maintaining the rôle of religious assemblies, took part in these rites of their members. Every artisan was expected to attend the marriage or funeral of any brother artisan. He was fined if he did not, as the tailors' records show. The smiths and coopers chose certain of their number to carry the remains of a dead brother to the grave. The Guilds provided their own palls—some of them very beautiful, of black velvet and silver—and always held a service for the repose of the dead brother's soul. That was done right up into the eighteenth century.

The most persistent religious idea connected with the Guilds was, however, that connected with their Patron Saint. Every Guild had its chosen Patron Saint, who was always the same,

## OF BELGIUM

## ORIGIN OF THE GUILDS

whether the Guild was at Bruges or Ghent, at Namur or Antwerp

One is reminded of these Patron Saints to this very day—it may be in the name of a street, in the locale of some forgotten Guild chapel, or in a sign, a symbol, or a statue, over some doorway or at some old street corner

Belgium without her Patron Saints would lose so much of her charm and fascination that it is worth while giving here the Patrons of the principal crafts, especially since these Patrons were adopted by every other commercial country by whom Belgium was taken as a model

<i>Name of Guild</i>		<i>Patron Saint</i>
Bakers -	-	St Aubert
Boatmen	-	St Nicholas
Brass-founders	-	St Barthelmy
Brewers -	-	St Arnould
Butchers	-	St Hubert
Cabinet - makers	and	
joiners	-	St Matthew
Carpenters	-	St Joseph
Carriers -	-	The Virgin
Coopers -	-	St Matthew
Frippers	-	St Hommebon
Goldsmiths and Smiths,		
Plumbers and Farriers		St Eloi
The Hanse	-	St François
Masons -	-	The Virgin, or the Four Crowned Martyrs
Mercers -	-	St Michael



## ORIGIN OF THE GUILDS      **THE FASCINATION**

<i>Name of Guild</i>	<i>Patron Saint</i>
Millers - - -	St Catherine
Potters - - -	St John the Baptist
Rope-makers - - -	St Paul
Surgeons - - -	SS Cosmo and Damien
Road-pavers - - -	St Guy
Tailors - - -	St Anne
Shoemakers and Tanners	SS Crispin and Crispinian
Vine-dressers - - -	St Vincent
Weavers - - -	St Severin
The Merchants adopted St Nicholas	

The festival of the Patron Saint was the greatest day in the year to the Guild, and was celebrated with all the pomp and ritual of procession and ceremony. That was the day on which the members paid solemn homage to their chosen protector in heaven. There were joyous bells rung on the eve and the day, and every brother of the Guild attended High Mass.

The altar of the Saint was bright with dazzling candles, and decorated with flowers and beautiful ornaments. The day itself was saluted with special music, and the Mass was terminated by a solemn procession, when the statue of the Saint was carried with great pomp, surrounded by torches and escorted by the Guild brothers, who each in his turn bore an image or banner.

The next day all were again present to hear the Mass for the dead of their Guild.

There were other days, too, when the Guild assembled at the foot of the altar of their Patron Saint, but it would appear that most of them had no fixed spot for the cult of their protector. In Namur, for instance, the brewers sometimes went to the Church of St Nicholas and sometimes to St Loup. The smiths arranged with the Dominicans and other Orders in turn. Others, again, had a special altar in one of the churches, for instance, the smiths, carpenters, and bakers, had theirs in the Church of the Franciscan Friars, the potters in that of St Nicholas, the mercers in that of St John the Baptist, the watermen in the Chapel of Notre Dame. Three of them—the brewers, butchers, and masons—had special chapels of their own, looked after by specially chosen (and paid) brethren.

Sometimes the chapels changed hands, and so a certain Chapel of St Crispin, put up by a boot maker in Namur, was taken over by the butchers in the fifteenth century, who later deposed St Crispin, and rededicated the chapel to their own patron St. Hubert.

One of the best known remaining instances of the special Guild chapels is that of the shoe-makers in Bruges, who held the end chapel of the north transept of the Cathedral. It is, of course, dedicated to SS Crispin and Crispinian, and in the carving you can find their usual symbols.

## CHAPTER X

## THE STORIES OF A FEW PATRON SAINTS

As St Nicholas was the Patron Saint of the boatmen and merchants as well as of all children, he is perhaps the most popular Saint in Christendom, and we shall find him remembered in Cathedral, church, and guild-house. So popular has he been that anecdotes have centred round his name in great profusion ever since the sixth century, and legends have taken root in his history which have added much to its picturesqueness, even if not to its veracity.

Unlike boys who enter the world in these days, he was extremely pious from his cradle—in fact, one story says he stood up in his first bath and gave thanks for his birth.

He was extremely wealthy, and gave himself up to good works. One of the stories (of which we often meet the symbols in the shape of three bags or purses of gold) is that he provided dowries for three penniless daughters of a neighbouring noble by casting through their windows bags of gold by night. He is therefore a suitable patron for all dowerless maidens.

He went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and showed such power over wind and waves that even during his lifetime his name was invoked as a protection to sailors in time of danger. Little wonder that merchants who travelled far and wide with their wares should find St Nicholas a help in peril, and adopt him as the Patron of their great Guild! In fact, the merchants of Venice once went to his tomb in Myra to fetch the relics of the Saint to guard their great commercial city, but another story says that forty Italian merchants of Bari, trading on the coast of Syria, really succeeded in taking them, and after getting them home safely, put up a splendid church for their reception. Hence we often come across a reference to him as St Nicholas of Bari.

Perhaps the most popular story of the Saint shows him as a traveller arriving late at night at an inn and demanding food. The owner would not admit the possession of any, but St Nicholas persisted in demanding the meat that was salting in the cellar. Trembling with fear, the owner led the Saint to the tub of brine, over which St Nicholas, suspecting something was wrong, made the sign of the cross. Immediately three little boys—who had been thus pickled by the wicked host—arose, and were restored by St Nicholas to their sorrowing and widowed mother. It is little wonder that he has been beloved of all children.

and that the Belgians as well as the children of all Christian lands look to his arrival in their midst, and if the visit is not paid on his real day (December 6), at least they look for him before the month is out, and if they call him Santa Claus—well, he is St Nicholas all the same

The children have several songs to St Nicholas, one of the favourite being

“ Oh bon St Nicolas patron des écoliers  
Apporte moi du sucre dans mon p'tit soulier  
Je serai toujours sage pour avoir du bonbon  
Je dirai ma prière et saurai ma leçon ”

At Ghent he has a magnificent church, whose prominent position on the Corn Market characterizes exactly the spirit of the great city of merchants. In the Grand' Place at Brussels he surmounts the Guild House of the mercers and overlooks the four continents symbolically represented below him. Little corners will show him either with three golden purses in some prominent position, or in the presence of a tub from which three heads are emerging. In all cases we shall see the number “three” symbolized, for all the stories clustering about him have somehow annexed that mystic number.

That the smiths and goldsmiths should have adopted St Eloi is no great wonder, for he was born at Lamoges in the sixth century, was apprenticed to a goldsmith, and became so skilled that



111 by A. I. I.

THE HOUSE OF THE HUMAN, THUS IS



Clothair II. of Paris commissioned him to make a golden chair of state. Although St Eloi seems at first to have been a bit of a dandy, he kept before himself and his assistants a high moral and religious ideal. At certain hours all would join in the singing of the Psalms, at other times they read the Scriptures, thus setting the example which the two Guilds of Smiths tried to keep up in their devotion to religious ceremonies. St Eloi was a real man who was taken from his workshop to become Bishop of much of France and Belgium. He had hard work to persuade his enormous flock to depart from the dark and cruel practices of their pagan times, but he found time for recreation, and in those leisured hours, letting his hands return to their old cunning, would fashion exquisite shrines for saintly relics, which he sought in the vaults of the churches. Amongst others he found the bodies of SS. Crispin and Crispinian, which he unearthed at Soissons, and put in a gold shrine.

Most of St Eloi's relics are at Noyon Cathedral (the seat of his bishopric), but small fragments of his bones are revered to this day at Bruges Cathedral, at St Martin's, Tournai, and at St Pierre's, Douai.

It is curious that he is often represented as a farrier holding a horse's leg, the story running that he was one day shoeing a violent horse



possessed by the Devil, so St. Eloi took off the leg, shod it in peace, and then put it on again. It is supposed that the farrier idea came from the shape of Clothair's chair, which was described as a "sellam," and erroneously translated as "saddle." Hence he has been adopted as the Patron Saint of farriers.

He, like St. Dunstan of England, had a short way with the Devil, and on one occasion seized the Devil's nose with his hot tongs and so persuaded him from his presence.

St. Severus is quite properly the Patron Saint of weavers, for he was himself a poor weaver of Ravenna. The election of a new Bishop at the Cathedral was a sight not to be missed in those days—the fourth century—when "sights" were rather rare, so in spite of his old clothes and the remarks of his family that he had much better stop at home working for his wife and daughter than go gadding about sight-seeing, Severus insisted on going to the Cathedral.

Inside were the nobles and well-dressed citizens invoking the Holy Spirit to direct their choice, and Severus stood, out of notice, behind the doors. But there came a white dove and settled on his head, and would not leave the poor spinner, though he tried to drive it away. That was so obviously an omen that the congregation there and then elected him Bishop.

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## SOME PATRON SAINTS

The news went to his home, but it was not likely that Vincentia his wife should believe it.

"Very likely that a man who tosses a shuttle should make a suitable prelate!" she said in derision. But so it was, and she lost her speech with the shock.

So the banner of the Flemish weavers represented their protector as a Bishop with a shuttle at his side.

It is natural, too, that the tanners and shoemakers should have adopted the two brothers, Crispin and Crispinian, as these two Christians were shoemakers at Soissons in the third century. In fact, at Soissons there is still shown the place where they were imprisoned for their faith and tortured by Rictiorarus, Prefect of the Gauls. In one of the tortures millstones were tied around their necks and they were cast into the Aisne. St. Crispin and St. Crispinian, however, swam across the river as easily as though the millstones had never been there. Boiling lead on their heads refreshed, rather than hurt, these hardy shoemakers, and a boiling mass of pitch, oil and fat never even blistered their skin. So the Prefect gave it up and burnt himself in disgust.

Having worn out their arch enemy, the two martyrs allowed themselves to be quietly beheaded. In the shoemakers' banners and symbols

they appeared with the tools of their trade and sometimes with the millstones hung round their necks

Belgium itself is under the patronage of St Joseph, and though no important Cathedral is dedicated to him, he is honoured in the largest chapel in the Ambulatory of the Church of Our Lady at Antwerp (once the Cathedral, and still generally known as such) In that chapel Philip IV, Duke of Burgundy, can be seen dedicating Belgium to St Joseph, and in another picture Pius IX, accompanied by St Peter, appoints St Joseph to the post

Brussels is chiefly looked after by St Michael, though Ste Gudule with her lantern (which the Devil is trying to blow out) are prominent, of course, in the Cathedral St Michael, however, is immensely in evidence Very properly he soars to the highest point in the city, and in shining gold he rests on the top of the beautiful open spire of the Town Hall The chief burghers of Brussels have seen to it that St Michael appears wherever possible, not only over the main portal and carved wooden door of the Town Hall, but on every lamp-post in the city, and in all sorts of unexpected places The presence of St Michael and his dragon add a great deal of interest to all sorts of commonplace objects, and shows how even modern life can receive many a touch of

## OF BELGIUM

### SOME PATRON SAINTS

romance if the myths and stories from the past are not entirely discarded

Antwerp is in the care of Our Lady, and Ghent in that of St Bavon, a nobleman of early times, who gave up worldly pleasures (when he was over fifty) and lived first in a monastery in Ghent, and then in a hollow tree outside

Bruges gives allegiance to St Donatian, once Bishop of Rheims—for a great many popular Belgian Saints are of local fame and interest. How he comes to carry a wheel as symbol is due to a story of his childhood, which relates how he was thrown over a bridge into the river by an angry servant. A holy man of Rheims told his parents to set some burning candles on a wheel and place it on the river bank. This they did, and away ran the wheel down stream till at a certain spot it stopped. Divers then entered the river and found the child at the bottom. He was brought up still alive.

His body was brought to Bruges by Count Baldwin of Flanders, and the people of that city eagerly invoke his protection in thunderstorms. He is best known in the celebrated picture of Jan Van Eyck, now in the Gallery of Old Masters in Bruges. It was meant to be the altar-piece of St Donatian's Cathedral, and was painted in 1436 to the order of George van der Palen, one of the Canons. The picture is really one of the Madonna

and Child, but as was the habit in pictures of those days, various other people were present. So St Donatian appears on the left, with his wheel and its burning candles very much in evidence.

The custom in those days, too, was for the giver of a picture to be painted in it too, that then left no doubt as to who the generous donor was. If he had a family, he put them in—boys on his side, girls behind his wife. Their Patron Saints had to be there as well. Sometimes this made quite a crowd, and the family were divided between two wings of the picture, which would close over it for protection. This Bruges Madonna of Van Eyck's is not a triptych, and the good Canon being without wife and family was easily put into the main subject. He is, in fact, being introduced to the Madonna by his Patron, a most jaunty St George, and the whole is distinctly suggestive of a State ceremonial at the Burgundian Court.

The presence of the Patron Saint can perhaps be seen at its best in the celebrated triptych painted for William Moreel by Memling, now also in the Gallery at Bruges.

But, indeed, Saints and symbols (religious or worldly) abound in all these old Belgian towns, and are a source of never-ending delight and interest. Without them the cities would lose half their fascination, for whether it be in the carving

## **OF BELGIUM**

### **SOME PATRON SAINTS**

over some doorway, a canopied figure over some  
old gate, a pelican or a ship here, a Madonna  
there, the stones have endless stories to tell of  
civic glory, religious thought or knightly deeds  
But those who will read the story must know the  
language

## CHAPTER XI

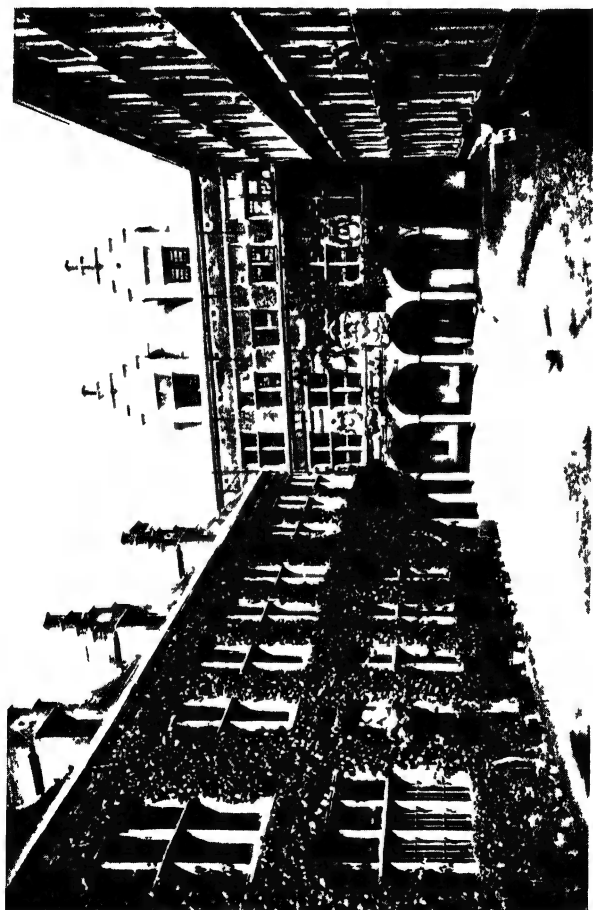
## THE HOME OF PRINTING IN BELGIUM

ALTHOUGH the nobles of old days were by no means often actively well disposed towards literature, one—Louis de Bruges, Seigneur de la Grut Huyse—stands out in the fifteenth century. His library was equal to that of his French Sovereign, Philippe le Bon, and nearly the whole of his manuscripts were produced by the Flemings at Bruges or Ghent. Among those to whom Louis showed great kindness was Colard Mansion, who was the first to introduce (about the middle of the fifteenth century) the art of printing into Bruges.

So important a branch of commerce did the manufacture of books become at this time, and so numerous were the different kinds of artists and craftsmen employed, that they formed themselves into a Guild in the City of Bruges, with a special charter and privileges granted by the Duke in 1454. The Patron Saint of scribes—as, indeed, of everyone connected with books (even librarians)—was St John, so the Guild was known as “*der ghilde van sinte Jan Eevagg*,” or the Guild of St John the Evangelist.







Fortunately, the old minute-books of the Guild are still preserved, and give the different trades of its members. There were printers, illuminators, engravers, cloth-shearers, vellum-makers, and booksellers, as well as schoolmasters and mistresses, for this was one of the few Guilds that admitted women.

This Guild, like other Guilds, had its own chapel—dedicated, of course, to St John—employed a permanent chaplain, and acquired property. It was during the period when the Guild and the pursuit of literature were at their highest that Caxton spent his thirty-three years in Bruges, and later, when he returned to England, the books which he translated for his own press existed as manuscripts in one of the noble libraries then at Bruges.

Other cities also possessed similar Guilds, thus at Brussels was the corporation of writers known as “*Les Freres de la Plume*,” and at Antwerp was the Guild of St Luke, founded rather earlier than the one at Bruges. It is curious that St Luke, rather than St John, watched over the Antwerp Guild, but this was probably due to the influence of its artist members. All the Flemish printers, whose names are famous through the world amongst book-lovers, were enrolled in one of these associations.

Many of the old books printed in these early

times are still to be seen. Amongst them are some beautiful volumes from Colard Mansion's presses, now kept most appropriately in one of the fine old buildings of Bruges—the Tonlieu, or Toll House, where taxes used to be levied on imported merchandise. This building was put up in 1477, and forms a beautiful home for the Bruges Library, containing as it does priceless manuscripts revealing the life of the city in bygone centuries.

It is supposed that Caxton learnt the art of printing while he was at Bruges, although he went there for a very different purpose. He was, in point of fact, a merchant, a liveryman of the Mercers' Guild in London, and went out as a trader to Bruges. There he had to obey the laws and regulations of that Chartered Company called the Merchant Adventurers, whose Governor had control over all English and Scotch traders in those parts, as it did in all other foreign towns.

The Mercers, however, were such a big and important Guild in London, with such a huge foreign trade, that they had a controlling voice in the management of the Merchant Adventurers, in fact, they are said to have founded the Association of these venturesome merchants in the tenth century, under the name of the Guild of St Thomas a Becket. So it happened

that when grocers, drapers, fishmongers, and others met to elect a new Governor for their branch association in Bruges, the Mercers suggested Caxton, after which he found himself in an almost autocratic position of authority over his fellow-Britons

He was kept busy watching over the unpacking of all newly-arrived goods and sealing all packs that went out, deciding all quarrels, and sentencing all evil traders. But in his leisure moments he wrote a little, read much, and formed acquaintance with Colard Mansion, from whom he learnt the art which made him famous when he returned to his native country

No stones remain of the house where Colard Mansion pursued his glorious craft at Bruges. We can, however, at Antwerp find the house, the workshop, and the books of another Belgian printer, famous in himself and his descendants for three centuries. This is known as the Plantin-Moretus Museum, for it has been taken over as a public monument since 1876, when it was bought by the City of Antwerp. It will be noticed that a street close at hand (just across the Market Square) is known as the Rue de l'Imprimerie, and that the border of the Scheldt just behind is known as the Quai St Jean—recording both the craft and its Patron Saint

It was about a century after the art had been

invented that Christopher Plantin printed his first book. For a poor boy, gifted as Plantin was with great intelligence and energy, the craft of printing offered a fine opening. It was not a common craft, for by this time princes and prelates thought it to their honour to protect the printer, and even to encourage him should he aspire to literature (provided that the literature was quite orthodox and devoid of new or dangerous ideas). Printed on paper of the highest quality, and bound in costly covers, the book of the sixteenth century was as much an artistic as an industrial production.

Plantin learnt his trade at Caen, which contained some of the most famous printers of France, and, after a short time spent in Paris, set up as a printer in Antwerp in 1549, being acknowledged as a Burgher of the city and as a member of the Guild of St. Luke in the next year.

Antwerp was at that time immensely flourishing, and was regarded as the commercial metropolis of the Low Countries (Holland and Belgium). It already contained many most celebrated houses of printing, and the whole quarter near the Rue des Peignes was occupied by a population living by type-making, engraving, binding, and everything connected with that trade.

It was no easy task for Plantin to conquer a

## OF BELGIUM

PRINTING

place for himself in such a city, but before long he was at the head of his craft, and moved into the beautiful museum which now perpetuates his name

What manner of man he was can be seen from his portrait on the triptych over his tomb in Antwerp Cathedral. As is usual in pictures of that time, he looks out at you from one of the wings of the triptych, where he and his little son are both kneeling, with their name Patron, St Christopher, behind. Judged from his portrait, it is little wonder that he occupied and adorned so beautiful a home, that he became the friend of artists, savants, and princes, and that he employed at one time as many as a hundred and sixty workmen.

He had his ups and downs in life, was sometimes in high favour, as when he published the portraits of Philip and Cardinal Granvelle, and sometimes in disgrace, as when he printed the portrait of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and dallied with the literature of the Protestant party. There was, indeed, one short period when he was accused of heterodoxy, deprived of his goods, and driven in flight to France. But in a year he was back again, and, under the protection of Philip II, printed with wonderful type, on wonderful paper, copies of the royal polyglot Bible in many languages, chiefly Eastern.

Plantin's house is not just as it was in Plantin's day, but bears both outside and inside marks of the life and habits of all who succeeded him, for the great business which he had built up passed into the possession of his daughter's husband, and, in the hands of Jean Moretus and his successors, achieved a fame for its work almost rivaling that of the great founder

Round the great courtyard each building had its name, such as the Iron Compass, Wooden Compass, Silver Compass, and so on, for Plantin early adopted the compass as his mark. This mark can be found, with his motto, *Travail et Constantia*, somewhere on all the works which he printed

Above the arches of the court can now be seen sculptured busts of the Plantin and Moretus family, and of the famous men who worked for them. It would also seem that every room—rather, every stone and every beam—bears upon it the sign of lofty aspirations and loving touch

Sculptured brackets support the wooden beams, carved wood ornaments the staircase, ceilings, chimneys, walls, have all something to tell of the artist's handiwork

The type-founders worked in a beautiful studio, and mounted to it by a beautiful staircase, and as for the "correctors' " room, not only were the chairs they sat on and the table they worked at beautiful, but there was no spot where the eye

could rest—on ceiling, window, or walls—which was not good to look upon

The rooms of the family are still to be seen with their carved chairs, their tapestry, their richly gilded leather, all speaking of wealth when wealth and taste went hand in hand. The rooms, too, tell of the intimacy between printer and savant or printer and artist. Priceless paintings adorn the walls. Rubens worked for the firm, and painted many portraits of the family, while pictures by Quellin, Van Orley, Van Dyck, Jordaens, are to be found scattered about the house.

The gilt leather hangings of the proprietor's office must have provided him with an impressive and inspiring background, and if any would-be author were inclined to regard himself or his work too highly before he entered the room, his estimate must quickly have been reduced to a more modest level by his environment before he went out.



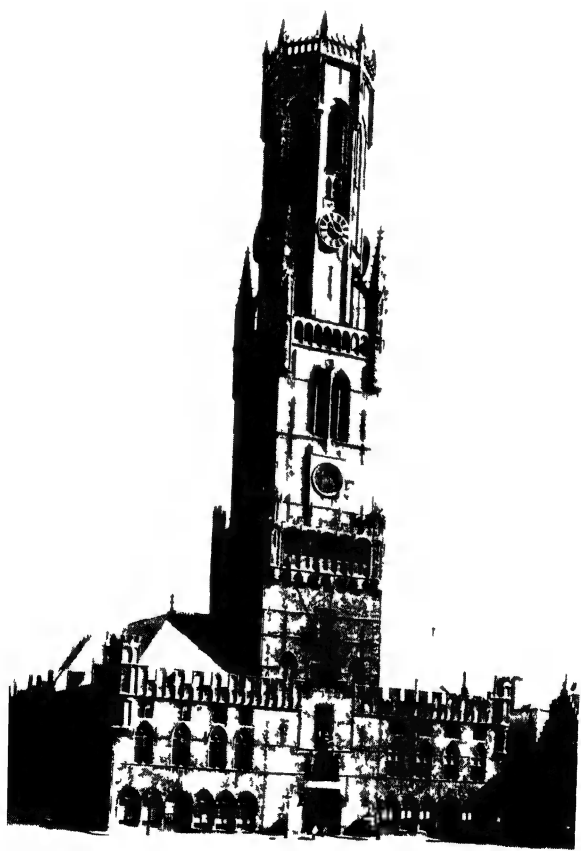
## CHAPTER XII

## THE BELFRIES AND HALIS

EVEN in its architecture the little kingdom of Belgium shows itself as quite distinct from any other country in Europe, and in certain ways more interesting. It exhibits the ideals of the people, and is a testimony in stone to the life of their cities.

The Flemish race, which gained ascendancy after the Roman influence had departed, behaved like their Teutonic kith and kin in dividing themselves into a number of separate municipalities independent of each other and recognizing no capital. They would probably have preferred to acknowledge no central authority, but that could not be helped, and so they submitted to the rule of their Dukes and Counts. Be it remembered, though, that the Duke or Count had to behave with reasonable justice, or there was trouble. In point of fact there frequently was trouble.

The result was that the municipalities were never actually in the power of feudal chiefs to anything like the same extent as the towns and



THE TOWER AT BRUGES F. 105

*D. 1001*



burghers of other European countries So when the rest of Europe was wasting its energy in feudal wars and its wealth in futile crusades, the busy burghers of the Belgian cities were quietly going on with their trade and their commerce, amassing that wealth which gave them power For free citizens of independent communities—if wealthy—could treat with feudal lords, and, in fact, even kings did not disdain their acquaintance, as we may well note in remembering the friendship of Edward III for Philip van Artevelde, the Captain of Ghent

Just as we find separate cities independent of each other, so we find the buildings which expressed their life erected in response to independent, and not national, impulse

Each of the great cities put up buildings in response to its needs, and the municipal buildings of Belgium surpass those of all other countries

Of course, we cannot expect these buildings to be as old as her churches or her castles, for the age of the supremacy of force and the supremacy of religion came before that of commerce and trade Churches were put up to satisfy the religious feelings of people, castles, walls, and city gates to protect their goods and persons against attack, long before they could think of markets and council chambers

It was in the twelfth century that the Belgian

cities were accumulating then wealth and acquiring those rights—expressed in charter after charter—which made them some of the most prosperous as well as independent cities in Europe

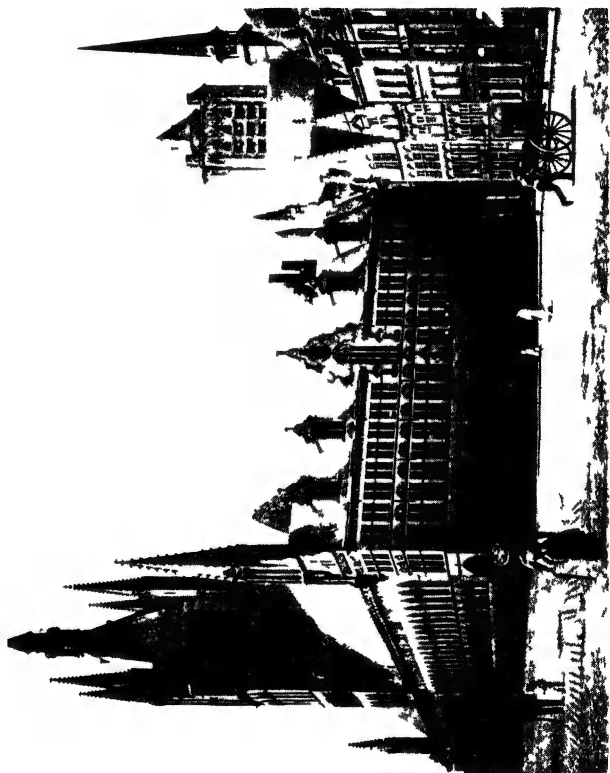
One of the very first rights which they worked to obtain from the ruling Count was permission to erect a belfry. The belfry therefore stands as a symbol of budding independence. The earliest charters granted the right of possessing a bell, and as soon as that right was obtained a tower in which it was to be hung was erected in a style proportionate to the greatness of the community.

Tower and bell together were an expression of freedom and power.

The bell was rung on all occasions when the community was called together—it might be to defend their city walls, it might be to repress an internal riot. Men were summoned by it to elect a magistrate or consider important rulings of the commune. It would ring the workmen to work, and at the same time, in the thronged thoroughfares of Bruges, enjoin all mothers to take their children out of the streets. It is said that at the present day the *werk-kloke* is still rung, and that the mothers still call their children in, though there is no longer a crowd of workmen to be seen in the streets.

Generally the tower was the record office too,





for charters and other documents needed a safe place, where they could be protected, not only against fire, but against the rioters who sometimes disturbed the peace of the city

The old uses of the belfries have now passed away, though their bells still ring out the hour by day or night. If they still by chance rouse some from their sleep, it is no longer because men must be summoned to council or to arms, but because the haunting melody of their carillon drives away repose

Many of the belfries, too, have passed away, but there are some remaining to add to the interest of their country, and testify to the past glory of their cities

Tournai is the oldest, and though it has been a good deal altered, it still remains as a fine tower. Its chimes with their half-hour concerts are quite modern

The lofty square tower intended for the belfry at Ghent was not begun till 1183, but the original building was never completed. For several centuries it boasted little more than 200 feet of stone, being crowned by a wooden spire. The present spire is but a modern addition, though the gilded dragon at the top was made in the town in the fourteenth century, when dragons enjoyed a higher reputation than now

Brussels, unfortunately, lost her final belfry



early in the eighteenth century after many disasters, the pity is all the greater as the early thirteenth-century building was one of the very finest in the land. Many others, such as that at Alost, Nieupoort, Furnes, have been through troublous days of destruction or alteration.

Many of the belfries formed part of either the town or trading halls of the city, the best known being those at Bruges, Ypres, Lierre, Nieupoort, and Alost. It would seem that just as the towns owed their wealth and importance to trade first of all, so the great trade halls made their appearance before the civil town halls. The most famous and most beautiful, as also the earliest, of all these trade halls or market buildings is the Cloth Hall of Ypres. It was begun in 1200 by that Count Baldwin of Flanders who, on account of his travels and crusades, is generally known as Baldwin of Constantinople, and it took more than a century to build. Its belfry is in the centre—a noble tower, whose bells have rung or chimed for near 700 years. Let it be put to the credit of those traders in wool and cloth that they erected for pure commerce a hall of inspiration, and let it be remembered to the shame of its destroyers that they have deprived humanity of one of the most majestic buildings in the world.

The Market Hall at Bruges, too, is beautiful, but severe, and is less known than the Cloth Hall

at Ypres, because it is dominated both in sentiment and fact by the lofty belfry in its centre. It is from the top of this lofty tower that the great bell has for centuries announced to the citizens below the death of Count or King, or warned them of the enemy at their gates.

The beautiful chimes are a rival to those of Malines—in fact, a native of Bruges will have no hesitation in proclaiming his as the better. Both are famous through the world. Bruges possesses more bells of high tones, and Malines more low notes. But Malines is fortunate in having an artist in Jef Denyn, who sends out from the Cathedral tower the most beautiful music that bells can ring. Hear him play “La Brabançonne” on the National Fête Day (July 21), and you will not wonder that on every Monday evening, when he plays from eight till nine, no traffic is allowed in the streets near the Cathedral, and the Rue sans Fin, close at hand, is crowded with chairs like a concert hall.

The welding of various activities into a civic whole expressed itself in the erection of town halls, of which Belgium gives us unrivalled examples. That at Bruges is the oldest—it was begun in 1377—and though rather small, is exceedingly beautiful. In any other town it would be more famous, but Bruges is so full of wonders of architecture that the Town Hall is sometimes

apt to be considered as only one building among many

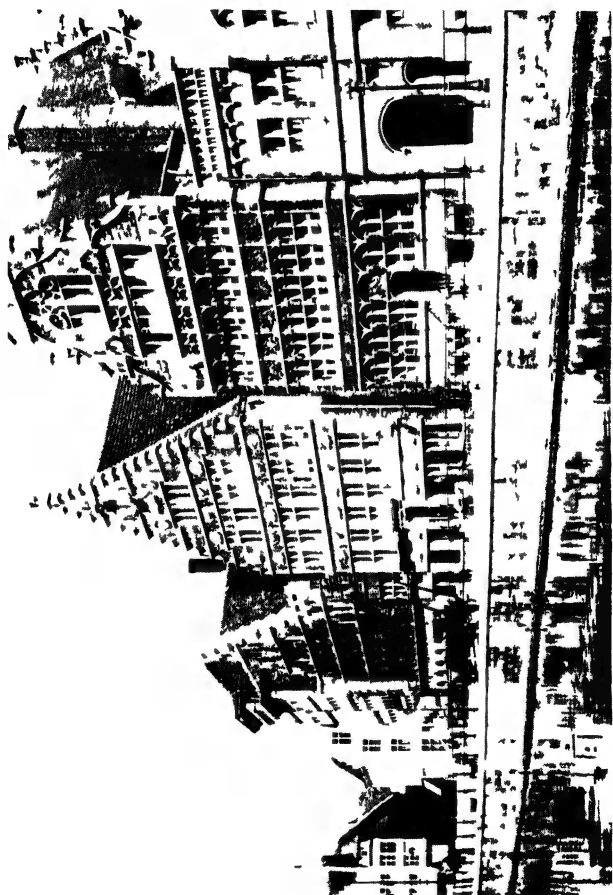
The opening of the fifteenth century saw the first stone laid of Brussels famous Hôtel de Ville, though it was some time before its unrivalled spire was crowned by the striking figure of St Michael resting upon his vanquished dragon, and testifying to his perpetual protection of the capital of Brabant

Louvain produced a little later a Town Hall smaller than that of Brussels, but much more elaborate. It is said to be the most elaborately carved piece of Gothic architecture now existing, and it is, in fact, one of the most beautiful gems in stone that one can wish to see. Ghent never finished its Civic Hall, so that only little more than half is to be seen of the original rather extravagant design.

Louvain had no belfry attached to its Town Hall, but Oudenarde, which somewhat copied it, was able to add both tower and bell.

Mons and St Quentin (the latter then in Flanders, now in France) also had their Town Halls, smaller than the ones just mentioned, but also beautiful.

Malines was unfortunate. Its burghers were ambitious for their city. "Let us," they said, "put up a Hôtel de Ville larger than that of Ghent," and to this they added, "and more





beautiful than that of Brussels'' But, alas! the burghers quarrelled on many matters, and their quarrels prevented the accomplishment of their wishes So the rival of Brussels and Ghent was never erected

Besides their Town Halls, Louvain, Malines, and Ghent also had their Cloth Halls, and though these cannot be compared with that at Ypres for size, they are pure in style and beautiful in design Louvain's fourteenth-century building ceased its connection with cloth in the seventeenth century, when it was handed over to the University, and became a home of learning instead of a warehouse of wool

All towns had their meat markets as well as their cloth halls, and what they were like can be seen from the existing *boucheries* at Ypres, Antwerp, Diest, and Ghent The *Maison des Bateliers* at Ghent gives us an idea of what the Craft Guilds could do when their turn came, and, indeed, each of these old cities shows beautiful examples of their habitations—weavers, tanners, mercers, printers, and a host of others, leaving their stones behind to tell of their some-time power

The old towns owe much of their charm, too, to the dwelling-houses of their former citizens It is true that the houses were mostly of brick, but they exhibit endless variety in design and decora-

tion Their great charm, however, lies in their delightful grouping in the narrow winding streets or along the banks of sleepy canals, where trees dip their branches down to meet their own reflections, and swans glide gracefully along the silent waters

## CHAPTER XIII

## INDUSTRY AND ART

It would seem curious to us if in these days a golden loom—symbolical of the industry of Lancashire—were chosen as an emblem of a noble order, yet an exactly comparable recognition of a great industry and all that it meant was made in Belgium in the fifteenth century Philip le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, under whose sway the Belgian towns had passed, knew the worth of his burghers, and honoured both them and their industry when he instituted the Order of the Golden Fleece. From the green slopes of England came the woollen fleeces of the sheep, the men of Flanders—the weavers of Europe—turned them into gold, and the greatest princes of Europe were proud to wear this symbol of a nation of traders. You can get practical proof of its influence in many a corner of old Bruges—as, for instance, on the *Maison de l'ancien Greffe* (originally the Municipal Record Office) and on the beautiful library (once the ancient *tonlieu* or toll-house)

Just as their great trade and commerce exer-



cised an influence upon the Court and reached into the domain of chivalry, so it also took the realm of art into its service. The art which arose and developed in Belgium, while her towns were amassing the wealth that came from a continuous commercial development, bears upon it the visible mark of its mercantile origin. Whereas the Italian towns, such as Florence and Venice, being oligarchies of nobles, produced in the realm of architecture the palaces and castles of princely families, and in the realm of painting pictures that would appeal to those princely families, the towns of Flanders, on the other hand, showed an essentially commercial influence in both its architecture and its painting. Instead of the palaces of the princes there were the town halls of the burghers, and instead of castles to protect the aristocracy from their enemies there were belfries to summon to duty the freemen of the city.

As for the pictures, they were largely portraits—the portraits of keen, vigorous, successful merchants—or they were devotional works, to be presented by the merchant to his church or his Guild, generally as an acknowledgment to his Patron Saint that he was not unmindful of favours received, and possibly sometimes as an encouragement to further efforts in the same direction.

When considering anything, therefore, in the domain of Flemish art, it is essential to regard it





*Photography A. Bailey*

A CORNER OF OLD HUCKS     *Page 112*

always as the art of a purely commercial people. It ought to be inspiring to us in England, and especially in our great commercial and industrial cities, to remember this fact. It is often said that commerce, industry, and art, cannot exist together, and it must be confessed that our own big towns have done very little to disprove the statement. The men of the Flemish towns, however, showed exactly the contrary, they adorned their open spaces with fountains and their bridges with statues, their private houses were decorated with carving, often gilded, and even their windows were rich in colour. For their public buildings nothing was too good. The Market Hall at Ypres, built for a purely commercial object—for the buying and selling of woollen cloth—was one of the most splendid buildings in the world, appealing to all mankind by the nobility of its appearance and simplicity of its design.

Our own trade unionists might do worse than note the beautiful Guild houses put up by their forerunners in Antwerp, Ghent, or Ypres.

Their pictures, too, were the result of infinite care. The artists who painted them were craftsmen, and, like all other craftsmen, had passed through long years of apprenticeship under the rules of their Guild. Living in days when there were no artists' materials at all, the young painter

had to learn to make every implement and every colour he needed, to prepare his oils, and to mix his varnishes. He had not only to know exactly what he wanted and how to use it, but he had to be able to know the difference in all cases between good and bad materials. A poor sample of Venetian ultramarine would produce evil results for which no after amount of care could atone.

From his apprenticeship he passed on to be a journeyman, often wandering through far-off towns, earning his hire from different masters and enlarging his knowledge of his craft. At the same time he saw the masterpieces of other artists, and after three or four years of wandering came back an accomplished and capable workman, with eye and hand prepared to carry out the ideas of his mind. After proving his abilities, the officers of his Guild were ready to accept him as a member, and, the fees being duly paid, he assumed the status of a master-craftsman, with a vote in his Guild and a share in its property. He had taken an oath of honesty, and given a promise to do only the best work. The Guild watched to see that he kept his oath and his promise.

As a member of his Guild, which would be dedicated to St. Luke, he would take his part in all public rejoicings and festivals, joining the great processions through the streets, like the craftsmen of all the other Guilds, meeting men of

high renown in their craft on terms of equality at their social functions. The artist in the fifteenth century was a great workman, achieving his rewards after great diligence, application, and thought, and being full of that old spirit of reverence for the things that were true, lovely, and of good report. Confronted with the problem of painting an altar-piece or a portrait, his first object was to do his work with such thoroughness that it would last, not only for a century, but for as long as Masses should be said for the pious donor—practically for ever. It was in their search for thoroughness and permanency that Jan and Herbert van Eyck discovered the method of painting by which they and their followers produced pictures of wonderful durability and finish, provided only that unsparing care was given to the work. The pictures of that period, small although they generally were, took not merely months to paint, but often years.

We should expect men who in their training and life were at one with the full life of their city to represent most faithfully the appearance of their fellow-citizens. And so, even when the pictures dealt with some Scriptural subject, the portraits of the donors were usually included, and it is always these portraits upon which the artist seems to have lavished most loving care. They are the portraits of the men the artist admired,

possessing the same industry and capacity as himself. They were not beautiful in face or figure, but they were men of strength, powerful in mind. They were just the kind of men who would succeed in the skilful handling of mercantile ventures, they possessed the skill, strength, and foresight, which made the men of Flanders into the commercial princes of Europe.

In their ideal women—the Madonnas and saints—the fifteenth-century artists did not apparently aim at charm and loveliness, they attempted to represent purity of heart, and for this purpose they used every emblem or symbol that colour or form could provide, whether it be in the use of a flower or the droop of an eyelid.

Into their pictures these same artists added a landscape background—often quite tiny, but exquisite in every detail. The care bestowed upon this cannot be better appreciated than in the famous picture by Jan and Herbert van Eyck of the “Adoration of the Lamb,” to be seen in the Cathedral of St. Bavo in Ghent. Every tiny flower in the garden of Paradise is painted with the greatest veracity, and the perfection is such that it can be examined through a lens without losing by a single touch its resemblance to Nature.

Not only were the details of the artist’s landscape painted with wonderful conscientiousness, but every line and wrinkle of his patron’s face or







hand was painted too—in fact, it would almost seem that all the hairs of the head were painted in one by one. The texture of the clothing, the pattern on the material, and the jewelled decorations of robe or figure, were represented with the greatest faithfulness. The Flemish painter was a man of astonishing diligence, like the men he worked for, both equally belonged to a race the most industrious probably that the world has yet known.

Everything these men of Belgium did they did with the thoroughness that produced only the best. It was so with their tapestry, which was finer than that made by any other workers, and with their jewellery, which showed a minuteness of finish and beauty of form sufficient to entitle the old goldsmiths to be considered as sculptors on a small scale.

Dinant was for centuries the centre of the medieval brass pottery, with a commerce extending all over Europe and even in England. The word *dinanderie* still persists as the name for this metal-work.

There is in Belgium a vast mass of surviving handicraft used by modern architects, and much of the work is exported to America to adorn her buildings.

Quentin Metsys, blacksmith and painter, who made the beautiful iron canopy over the old well

## **THE FASCINATION OF BELGIUM**

at Antwerp, stands out for us as one of the most famous examples of the typical artist-craftsmen. But the tradition of the master working with his hands still persists, and in this very year can be seen in Manchester a typical example, a man who in his own country employs forty workmen is not ashamed to bare his arms, and with his own hands model a beautiful rose from a few ounces of black iron .

The pure nobility of industry and the ideals of perfect work have nowhere been more powerfully exhibited than among the people of Belgium

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